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Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5494th meeting

Monday, 24 July 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. De La Sablière	(France)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mr. Ikouebe
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	Ghana	Mr. Christian
	Greece	Mrs. Telalian
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Peru	Ms. Tincopa
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Rogachev
	Slovakia	Mr. Grexa
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Manongi
	United States of America	Ms. Wolcott Sanders

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Letter dated 6 July 2006 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2006/494)

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06-44052 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Children and armed conflict

Letter dated 6 July 2006 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2006/494)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform members of the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Brazil, Canada, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Finland, Guatemala, India, Liberia, Myanmar, San Marino, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Uganda and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 19 July 2006 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations, which will be issued as document S/2006/562, and which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the meeting of the Security Council being held on Monday, 24 July 2006, regarding the issue of children and armed conflict."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the meeting in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Mansour (Palestine) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund; Mr. Ad Melkert, Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme; Mr. Ian Bannon, Acting Director of Social Development and Manager of the Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit of the World Bank; and Mr. Bukeni Beck, representative of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2006/389, containing the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2006/494, which contains a letter dated 6 July 2006 from France, and document S/2006/497, which contains a letter dated 10 July 2006 from the Chairman of the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict.

I shall now give the floor to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy.

Ms. Coomaraswamy: I would like to begin by congratulating the Security Council on its bold initiative — resolution 1612 (2005) — which seeks to protect children in armed conflict. I would like to express my particular gratitude to the French

Chairperson, Mr. Jean-Marc de La Sablière, for his active and groundbreaking leadership on that issue.

As we watch events unfold in the Middle East, we are reminded that children often bear the brunt of physical and psychological trauma caused by armed conflict. It is the desire to protect children that united the world one year ago when the Security Council passed that landmark resolution. Resolution 1612 (2005) is novel in a number of ways that give it prominence.

It is a testament to the fact that the Security Council is committed to going beyond words to specific action in endorsing a monitoring and reporting mechanism. That mechanism, clearly designating a system for reporting on grave violations against children from the field level through to the Secretary-General's Office, has been set up in order to address the situations of children in conflict-affected areas more diligently. Through the resolution, the Security Council also expresses its intention to combat impunity through possible targeted measures against repeat violators of children's rights. The Security Council has also called for specific action plans to stop the recruitment and use of children as soldiers, giving parties a framework to ensure compliance. The Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and its bimonthly meeting schedule ensure that the issue of children and peace and security is actively seized by the Council throughout the year.

In the past year, much has been accomplished on that ambitious agenda for children. The Security Council Working Group has met on four occasions and has set its programme of work for the year. The United Nations system — including UNICEF, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights— and its partners have worked diligently, on a tight deadline, to bring that mechanism to fruition in pilot countries, and the first report, on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was submitted to the Security Council Working Group in June of this year. The community of non-governmental organizations is very engaged in supporting the monitoring and reporting agenda, and civil society representatives in affected countries are gearing up to strengthen their interface on monitoring and reporting. Finally, we are encouraged that other destinations for action — the Human Rights Commission and the International Criminal Court — are addressing the issue of violations of children's rights in conflict in an effective manner.

However, although the groundswell of support for that resolution and the monitoring and reporting exercise in particular have been strong, and the situation for children in Sierra Leone, Burundi, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo has improved markedly, children continue to suffer. Over 250,000 children continue to be exploited as child soldiers by armed forces and groups around the world. Tens of thousands of girls are being subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence. Abductions of children are becoming more systematic and widespread. Since 2003, over 14 million children have been forcibly displaced within and outside their home countries, and between 8,000 and 10,000 children are killed or maimed each year by landmines.

I would like to share with the Council the story of Abou, a boy from Sierra Leone, abducted by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) from his school in Kenema. He was only 11 years old at the time. Four years later, Abou had become a killer, a known and feared commander of the RUF rebels and one of the youngest. He was demobilized by the United Nations when he was only 15, receiving amnesty for atrocities committed during the conflict in Sierra Leone. And although his community accepted Abou back, it was clear that many in the community were still afraid of the boy, and he was quite isolated. Six months after being reunited with his family, Abou disappeared. Three years later, Abou was among the children disarmed and demobilized in Côte d'Ivoire. He told a story of leaving his community in Sierra Leone because he was "haunted by bad spirits" and of being re-recruited to fight for Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) in Liberia. He later went as a mercenary to Côte d'Ivoire, together with other LURD fighters. In an interview with United Nations staff, Abou explained, "I left because what I really know how to do well is fight and be a soldier, but there is peace in Sierra Leone".

The story illustrates a terrible tragedy of the trauma of children and the communities that they have been forced to brutalize; of the tremendous challenges to the successful healing and reintegration of children in the aftermath of conflict; and of the recycling of children into conflicts that shift across borders. Unfortunately, there are too many Abous out there, and we are compelled to protect them.

In that vein, we await the Security Council Working Group's deliberations and recommendations to the Security Council on the report of the situation of children affected by armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The initial phase of the setting-up of a monitoring and reporting mechanism is now over. It is now time for the Council to take effective action against repeat offenders. As today is an important milestone for resolution 1612 (2005), the response of the Council to its first substantive report on children and armed conflict presents a key opportunity to set in place measures to spare more children the fate of Abou. The world is watching and the children are watching. We must not fail them.

The United Nations system and its partners have risen to the challenge of responding fully and capably in this first phase of the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005). We have been encouraged by the response of actors at the local, national, regional and international levels. Many partners and stakeholders are cooperating with each other to make Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) a success for children. My Office takes this opportunity to thank all of them for their diligence and their commitment.

Now that this first phase of implementation is coming to an end, it is time for the United Nations system and the Security Council to look beyond the limited scope of the first phase and to broaden the geographical scope of the monitoring and reporting mechanism to all situations of concern in which grave violations are perpetrated against children in armed conflict.

In addition, the international community must begin to look at long-term solutions for children affected by armed conflict. I stand by my United Nations agency colleagues in the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank, as well as our non-governmental organization partners, in advocating that, to be truly adequate in responding to the needs of children affected by conflict, band-aid solutions are not sufficient and long-term development responses that will result in the meaningful reintegration of those children, including access to education and alternative livelihoods, should be developed. Those should be the foundations of concerted international action and a sustained commitment to the provision of resources and technical assistance for those children.

In conclusion, this month also marks the 10-year anniversary of the Graça Machel report on children and armed conflict, which gave birth to a new consciousness in the United Nations about the plight of children affected by armed conflict. In that sense, I find it useful to go back to the words of Graça Machel herself to remind us of the reason we are meeting today. She said:

> "We cannot waste our precious children. Not another one, not another day. It is long past time for us to act on their behalf — the impact of conflict on children is everyone's responsibility and it must be everyone's concern."

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, Ms. Ann Veneman.

Ms. Veneman: Mr. President, I am pleased to join you today as the Security Council turns its attention to the situation of children in armed conflict. We appreciate the role of the French Government over the past six years in ensuring that the Security Council's peace and security agenda benefits and protects children affected by armed conflict.

As all here are aware, children continue to be targeted in today's armed conflicts. Since 1996 approximately two million children have died as a result of war, while a further twelve million have been left homeless and an estimated six million injured or physically disabled. Children are the first to suffer the poverty, the malnutrition and the ill health resulting from the disruptions caused by war.

In every region of the world, girls and boys continue to endure the consequences of being caught up in wars. The current situation in the Middle East is no exception.

Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and the Working Group dedicated to children and armed conflict herald a new era of cooperation to end some of the most egregious abuses of children during conflict. Effective monitoring and reporting will help reveal the extent and severity of the violations, bring greater accountability to those who target, abuse or exploit children, and strengthen programmes to assist and protect children.

In addition to an effective monitoring and reporting mechanism, there are three areas that are

relevant to resolution 1612 (2005), including the use of children by armed forces and groups, gender-based violence and small arms and light weapons.

First, monitoring and reporting. In collaboration with the inter-agency task forces in each of the seven pilot countries, UNICEF and its partners have begun to implement the monitoring and reporting mechanism. Common terminology and a minimum set of indicators for violations against children have been developed. Technical support and guidance have been provided in Nepal, Burundi, Somalia and Côte d'Ivoire. Together with non-governmental organization partners, UNICEF will continue to help ensure that monitoring and reporting will lead to programmes that prevent and address the consequences of these violations. For example, reliable data on the prevalence of sexual violence can help in decisions to establish clinics and other support services.

Second, child recruitment. Girls and boys are sometimes involved directly in combat but are also exploited as messengers, informers, cooks, porters or sexual slaves. Recruitment can be forced, but it also results from factors such as poverty. That is why prevention, demobilization and reintegration need to be comprehensive by also providing children with education, training, support and protection. A document that outlines guiding principles for preventing the use of children in conflict and facilitating their demobilization and reintegration is being developed. A symposium to present this document will be hosted by the French Government in Paris at the end of the year.

Third, gender-based violence, which is another devastating effect of conflict on children. Sexual violence represents a significant threat to children, particularly girls. More than 40 per cent of reported sexual assaults are perpetrated against girls aged 15 or younger. In conflict situations, violence against women and girls is often used as a strategic method of warfare and is often associated with an increase in the risk and spread of HIV and AIDS. Data on gender-based violence is lacking in many countries due to an absence of reporting mechanisms and support services, along with factors such as shame and stigma.

Resolution 1612 (2005) provides an opportunity to strengthen not only the reporting of gender-based violence but also programmes to provide victims with access to health, psychological and legal support. Sexual violence against children cannot be tolerated, and we must do all that we can to prevent it and to deal with its impacts.

Fourth, small arms and light weapons. The Council is well aware of the effects of small arms and light weapons on children in armed conflict. UNICEF will work with Member States to achieve the objectives set out in the United Nations Programme of Action on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Here again, studies and surveillance that can lead to programmes to prevent violence and rehabilitate child victims are needed. The Security Council's support in encouraging respect for arms embargoes, including the criminalization and punishment of violators, is absolutely critical.

UNICEF has deep appreciation for the Council's commitment to deal with children in armed conflict. We encourage enhancing the monitoring and reporting mechanisms in countries where children are affected by armed conflict. The safety and security of those who implement the mechanisms must be ensured. Under no circumstances should United Nations staff or those of our partners be targeted while they carry out their crucial roles.

Resolution 1612 (2005) provides opportunities to bring together key elements to monitor compliance and accountability. Governments have a fundamental responsibility to protect their populations. The international community, and especially the Security Council, must collectively and regularly remind all parties to a conflict that egregious violations against children cannot be tolerated.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, Mr. Ad Melkert.

Mr. Melkert: It gives me great pleasure to speak today before the Security Council. I would like to congratulate the membership and the presidency of the Security Council for keeping our collective attention focused on the important issue of children and armed conflict. In the United Nations system, we are particularly grateful for the leadership of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

For the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and for the broader development community, children and youth are significant partners in building

sustainable peace, preventing violent conflict and contributing to development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Children and youth are not just victims with special needs, but are also powerful agents for reconciliation and positive change. Many of our programmes and policies that engage with the rights, protection and well-being of war-affected children are increasingly premised on this core belief.

Let me mention a few examples. In south Sudan, UNDP and development partners have not only supported disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes for under-age persons, but also recently helped organize, in collaboration with civic actors, a youth peace conference. In Uganda, DDR programmes have made special provisions for the return of young girls who were abducted by rebels and who upon return to their communities face the stigma attached to bearing children out of rape or wedlock. In Sierra Leone, UNDP has supported a national initiative — the National Youth Councils — to give young persons the skills to re-engage in the process of governance by electing their councils, which have official decision-making powers at both the district and the national levels. In the Niger delta region of Nigeria, UNDP and other partners are supporting efforts, in collaboration with Shell Oil, to provide youth with viable alternatives to armed violence. Instead of short-term vocational training, this assistance involves district-level youth centres, which provide youth with an integrated package of skills, from business formation to conflict management, as well as the long-term accompaniment that they need to become self-reliant entrepreneurs. In Port-au-Prince, a highly successful employment-generation initiative has engaged youth in civic activities, such as garbage pick-up and repair of basic utilities, thus making them active agents for reconstruction.

Those examples illustrate that we need to, and can, engage young persons in conflict management and peacebuilding initiatives, including the provision of concrete skills for youth in accompanying their communities in reviving agriculture, thus reducing the pressure on urban areas, and training in leadership skills.

Through the Mano River Union Peace Initiative, UNDP is supporting efforts in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea to implement those means. They include the successful United Nations-led demobilization of 60,000 former combatants in Liberia, where UNDP and other agencies have sought to focus attention on the lasting reintegration of primarily young combatants, especially girls and young women, into their communities. At least half of the former combatants have now been successfully reintegrated into their communities. The challenge is to equip them with longer-term opportunities for political and economic empowerment, particularly through job creation.

We therefore must look critically at how we can improve our efforts to make young people active agents for peace. How often do we craft post-conflict needs assessments or interim poverty reduction strategies that place a particular emphasis on initiatives for the political and economic empowerment of youth? We often worry about the threat that large numbers of unemployed youth pose to peace and security in fragile situations, but how often do we make the effort to train youth as election observers, or peace monitors in their communities, or as a national network of mediators that can help bring peace to their communities? As we spend billions in reconstructing post-conflict societies, we also need to invest more to establish national service schemes that provide youth with life skills, as they help to rebuild their communities.

In the same way that we have moved from traditional approaches to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to the so-called three Rs approach, which prioritizes not just the disarming of former combatants, but their return, rehabilitation and sustainable reintegration into their home communities, we need a fresh approach to young persons and armed conflict. That new approach could be called the "three Es", as in engage young persons in efforts to build lasting peace, educate young persons with life skills and not just perfunctory job training, and empower young persons to develop and seize political and economic opportunities so that they can transform their countries and their societies.

In conclusion, I call upon Security Council members, and indeed all Member States, to give the United Nations presence on the ground — including the United Nations country teams — the tools and resources that they need to move towards working more proactively with young persons in situations of armed conflict, so that children and youth become full partners in bringing their countries and societies closer to peace and stability.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I now give the floor to the Acting Director of Social Development and Manager of the Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit of the World Bank, Mr. Ian Bannon.

Mr. Bannon: The President of the World Bank, Mr. Paul Wolfowitz, is unable to be here today and I first wish to transmit his warm greetings to the Security Council. President Wolfowitz has also asked me to convey his appreciation to Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy of France for organizing this special meeting and for inviting the World Bank, and to Ambassador Jean-Marc de la Sablière for presiding over the meeting.

As many members know, over the past 10 years the World Bank has considerably expanded its work on armed conflict, increasing research on conflict and development, and adopting more flexible instruments, approaches and financing mechanisms to support countries in the transition from armed violence to sustainable development. Research has explored the reinforcing linkages between poverty and conflict and the special needs of vulnerable groups. Among the vulnerable groups affected by conflict, it is clear that children are most at risk. Over 300 million young people below the age of 25 live in countries affected by armed conflict, representing nearly a fifth of the world's total population of children and youth. Children and youth living in conflict settings face an array of complex and urgent needs. We see today's meeting as an important occasion to discuss those complex needs and explore ways in which we can work together to offer those young people a stake in a more peaceful and prosperous future.

Taking into account the concept paper prepared for this meeting, I would like to focus my remarks first on some illustrations of the Bank's approach and, secondly, to offer some examples of Bank operations that aim to support children in conflict and post-conflict settings, including demobilized children.

As with most Bank activities, analytical work underpins our policy and operational interventions. For example, recent studies have sought to provide guidance on the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers in Africa and on reaching education goals for all objectives in countries affected by conflict. We have also taken an interest in better understanding the effects of youth bulges on conflict and instability. We find that youth bulges make countries more unstable and thus more susceptible to armed conflict, but youth are not the problem — they are not the enemy. The challenge is rather to expand employment and livelihood opportunities for young people and to give them a voice and influence on decisions that affect their lives. Recent research is also focusing on the way young men in Latin America and Africa construct their sense of identity and why that definition of masculinity is often based on the exertion of power through violence.

In addition, children and youth have recently become a special focus for the World Bank. Three years ago, we established a Children and Youth Unit in the Human Development Network, which works across the institution in a number of cross-cutting areas, such as education, health, social protection and social development, including the special needs of children and youth affected by conflict. This year's *World Development Report* focuses on children and youth. All this work highlights the multidimensional needs of children and youth, from protection from violence, to education and training, to psychosocial support.

We have also learned that children and youth face different needs, although interventions should be in place as early as possible. Protecting children and youth from violence is clearly an urgent priority, but we must also understand that young people in conflict face a simultaneous and more complex transition from conflict and childhood to peace and adulthood.

I would now like to touch on Bank operations related to children in conflict and immediate post-conflict situations. In addition to our normal projects, we also have a number of grant facilities that support conflict-affected countries, fragile States and the special needs of young people. Our Post Conflict Fund, for example, has supported a number of activities on the demobilization and social reintegration of children involved in armed conflict, very often in partnership with UNICEF, and most recently working in Côte d'Ivoire. A recently established trust fund supported by Italy will address at-risk children and youth in West Africa.

A more comprehensive programme is the Multi-Donor Demobilization and Reintegration Programme in the Great Lakes region of Africa. The World Bank administers that multi-agency programme, collaborating with United Nations agencies and other partners and supported by a number of donors, including France. It

currently targets 450,000 ex-combatants in seven countries. The Programme also supports special projects that complement national programmes designed to more effectively provide demobilization and reintegration support in emergency circumstances or to target specific groups, such as children associated with armed groups.

Since 2003, the Programme has been funding six special projects in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with a budget of $20 million for the prevention of recruitment and for the demobilization, tracing and reintegration of children associated with armed groups. As a result, out of the estimated 25,000 children with various fighting groups, some 19,000 have been released or demobilized. There are similar projects in the other countries of the Great Lakes region.

I would like to end my remarks by emphasizing the need to strengthen collaboration and partnerships if we are to effectively address the needs of this important group. Although in recent years we have redoubled our efforts at the World Bank to support conflict-affected countries and to better target the special needs of young people affected by conflict, we are fully aware of the fact that we need to work hand in hand with our colleagues in the United Nations system as well as with our partner Governments and civil society actors if we are to make a sustainable difference. Children and youth in countries affected by conflict deserve our support, not only because they are a vulnerable group with special needs, but also because it is a good investment, an investment in a more secure and peaceful future.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes, in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the text in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On behalf of the Security Council, I extend a warm welcome to Marie-Madeleine Kalala, Minister for Human Rights.

Ms. Kalala (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, let me begin my statement by telling you how pleased my delegation is to see you presiding over the Security Council during this month of July 2006, and to express the sense of honour that I have in taking part in this important debate, which I predict will be successful.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the essential nature of the report of the activities of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflicts (see S/2006/497, annex), which you, Mr. President, have the honour to direct, and to thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), for their important statements.

My delegation welcomes the Security Council's growing interest with respect to the tragic situation of child soldiers. It supports the coalition that is intended to put an end to the use of child soldiers, the Working Group and the monitoring and reporting mechanism whose aim is to protect children who are affected by armed conflicts.

The latest report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2006/389) objectively describes the situation that has prevailed in my country in recent years. Still, one needs to point out that the violations highlighted in this report are mainly perpetrated by elements of armed groups still active in certain parts of the country, particularly in Ituri and the North and South Kivus.

But as is known, considerable progress has been made by the Government in the fight against the use of children in armed conflicts, both in terms of prevention and in terms of protection.

With respect to the prevention efforts, I should point out that the Democratic Republic of the Congo has ratified and implemented many international and regional legal instruments relating to protecting children. Today one should acknowledge that since 1999 the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been ranked third among African countries that have a national plan of action in this area, in accordance with the provisions of the resolution of the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993.

Lastly, I would point out that all of this legislative progress has been supported by a vast outreach and awareness-raising campaign, by both the Government and non-governmental human rights organizations. This campaign, which is still under way,

targets officials entrusted with the implementation of these laws, as well as parents and children.

The Government has spared no effort with respect to protecting children who are recruited in violation of the legal provisions that are in effect. In 1999, despite a state of war, the Government organized in Kinshasa an important forum on the demobilization of child soldiers, which was attended by experts from a number of countries of Africa, Europe, Asia and the Americas. That forum provided new impetus to the perception of the phenomenon of child soldiers in my country, and its recommendations led to Law Decree number 066 of 9 June 2000, which had to do with the demobilization and reintegration of vulnerable groups within combatant forces.

In May 2004, continuing the process under way, the Government developed the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programme (NDDRP), with the assistance of a number of partners, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This programme was financed by the World Bank and the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme. It deals with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of all combatants who are not eligible to serve in the new restructured and integrated army, including child soldiers. It is implemented through a structure that has been called the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, whose acronym is CONADER.

The implementation of the NDDRP has produced encouraging results. Indeed, out of an estimated total of 33,000 children associated with armed groups and forces, 19,054, including 2,881 girls, have been removed and placed in transitional support structures that provide psychosocial care to help them make the transition from military life to civilian life, with a view to their social and economic reintegration.

As of 30 June 2006, of the 19,054 child soldiers who had already been removed from their armed groups and forces, 12,471 had been reunited with their families. Of these 12,471 reunited children, 9,717 are back in school while some 6,312 are being reintegrated into the economy.

However, I do need to note that the implementation of the NDDRP has met a number of considerable constraints, particularly with respect to difficulties related to, on the one hand, locating the children's families in order to reunify them, and, on the other hand, monitoring the situation of all child soldiers who have been reunited and are being provided reintegration support. Other constraints are related to the shortfalls in funds allocated for their care and in the ongoing hotspots of tensions in certain parts of the country.

Strengthening the fight against the phenomenon of child soldiers in my country requires that solutions that are consonant with the constraints that I mentioned be rapidly found.

From this standpoint, with respect to the shortfall of resources allocated for care of children, I must point out that the overall financing for the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programme is approximately $200 million, out of which only $5 million were allocated for children associated with armed forces and groups. To date, 14,000 children still need to be removed from armed groups and forces, while the moneys allocated for this have already been totally spent. It is also necessary to continue implementation of the Programme with additional substantial support being provided to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

With respect to the themes of this debate, within the framework of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1379 (2001), my delegation, which intends to provide all its cooperation to the monitoring and reporting mechanism that has been set up in implementation of 1612 (2005), believes that the mechanism of "naming and shaming" should also cover all parties to a conflict who recruit and use child soldiers, regardless of whether that situation is on the Council's agenda or not.

I would be remiss if I were to conclude my statement without expressing my gratitude to the international community, which has unceasingly supported the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the programme's implementation. My Government welcomes the cooperation of the UNICEF office in Kinshasa and commends its great interest in the protection of children. It thanks the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Bretton Woods system and UNDP for their active involvement in the Government's efforts in the process of the demobilization of child soldiers.

Lastly, in these difficult times, allow me to recall that many children are living in situations in which there has been a breach of international peace and security. I am thinking in particular about the children of the Palestinian Authority, of the State of Israel and of Lebanon. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is fully confident that the Council will soon find a solution to the tragedy that is taking place in the Holy Land.

The President: On behalf of the Security Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency The Honourable Pertti Torstila, Under-Secretary of State of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Torstila (Finland) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) on this important subject today.

(*spoke in English*)

The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

I will abide by the schedule envisaged for today's debate; the full statement of the European Union is available in writing.

I also wish to express my appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, for her valuable contribution to today's meeting. The European Union truly appreciates her recent appointment. Further, I wish to express my appreciation to the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Veneman, for her statement and for the commendable work done by UNICEF.

Ten years ago, the Graça Machel report laid the foundation for the agenda on children and armed conflict, and today's discussion is therefore more than timely. While resolution 1612 (2005) was an important step in taking forward the "era of application", we must now ensure that we take renewed joint action in order to improve the situation on the ground.

The situation of children affected by armed conflict continues to be grave. To give one serious example, we continue to have deep concerns as to the negative impact, including the health and psychological consequences, of violence on the present and future well-being of children in the Middle East region as a whole.

The Secretary-General identified the six grave violations that should receive priority attention in the reporting and monitoring mechanism. It remains critical that urgent action be taken in those areas. Grave and persistent violations must lead to targeted and concrete measures in response.

The European Union is encouraged by the work already carried out by the mechanism. Dialogue with parties and time-bound action plans are central. We welcome the reporting and monitoring efforts by United Nations field teams, including UNICEF, Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) child protection advisers and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in coordination with civil society partners and concerned Member States. We look forward to the upcoming review on the mechanism, with a view to further strengthening it.

The European Union welcomes the recent report by the Security Council Working Group on children and armed conflict. We appreciate the important work undertaken by the Group as well as its transparency. We look forward to receiving the Group's reports in future as well.

The presentation of the first country report on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was an important development. The European Union urges that its recommendations be taken up effectively. Further, the European Union considers it important to continue the practice of reporting on specific situations, as well as to make full use of the briefing by the Special Representative.

The Security Council has noted that the information compiled by the mechanism may be considered by other international, regional and national bodies, within their mandates. The European Union will seek to find ways to best support the mechanism and its implementation.

For its part, the European Union is determined to continue to mainstream issues related to children and armed conflict.

The European Union has continued to implement its Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict. Action — be it political or financial — has been focused on selected priority countries. At the same time, urgent situations in other conflict areas have been closely monitored.

The European Union adopted an implementation strategy for the Guidelines in order to pay special attention to the issue of children in countries affected by armed conflict. In doing so, it is important to work closely with the United Nations agencies and other actors in the countries concerned.

In European Union crisis-management operations, the protection of children is a priority. The EU has recently adopted a checklist for the integration of the issue into its operations from the early planning through to the implementation stages.

A gender-sensitive approach also has to be applied when it comes to children. The European Union has devoted particular efforts to protecting girls from sexual violence, abuse and exploitation. Further, all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and security sector reform, programmes should pay special attention to the specific needs of girls.

We must ensure close collaboration between the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, civil society and Governments in order to achieve a shared ownership. Moreover, the participation of non-governmental organizations is central also in providing support to protection mechanisms and programmatic responses.

The European Union continues to actively support and work closely with the Special Representative and other actors with the goal of relieving the suffering of children in situations of armed conflict and ensuring that those responsible for atrocities against children are held accountable. We look forward to further consideration of these issues later this year.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Security Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency The Honourable Igor Grexa, Director-General for Legal and Consular Affairs of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Slovakia, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Grexa (Slovakia) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate the French presidency for having chosen this important and difficult subject. We know that France does not hesitate to tackle complex subjects and that it faces difficulties head-on. I think that this "French approach" is not only positive and praiseworthy in and of itself, but also very encouraging for the other partners and players involved.

The ideas put forward by France and its perseverance, if I may put it that way, have made a great contribution to ensuring that the issue of children and armed conflict has become a major and ongoing concern of the Security Council.

But we know that expressions of gratitude, well-deserved though they may be, are not the most important thing, so allow me to move on to more substantial issues.

I do not really think that we need to show why it is so important that we continue to work on this issue. Children are victims of all kinds of atrocities resulting from armed conflicts: child soldiers, child refugees, displaced children, excluded children, unhappy children in unhappy families — the list is long. Even if this were strictly a humanitarian issue, resolute efforts would still be imperative. Nevertheless, as Minister Douste-Blazy clearly emphasized to his colleagues in a letter addressed to his counterparts before this meeting, this is not just about a humanitarian issue, it is also about a danger for development and stability in the world.

Slovakia associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Finland a few moments ago on behalf of the European Union. I shall therefore stress just a few brief points in my national capacity.

Slovakia very much appreciates the work done by Working Group established pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005). While it is of course too soon to carry out an assessment, we know that the Group has made a good start and that it is going to be a very useful tool.

In principle, we are happy with the initial results regarding the examination of the report on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (see S/2006/497, annex). That is of course due in large part to the quality of the report itself, for which I would like to thank its authors. Slovakia also appreciates the constructive participation of the permanent representative of the country concerned in the meeting of the Group, especially the affirmation of his Government's willingness to continue to cooperate. That is a good sign both as regards the subject itself and for the future of the Group in general.

Slovakia supports all the recommendations contained in the report on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We also believe that the Working Group should carefully examine the recommendations made by non-governmental organizations working in the field, as contained in the report entitled "Struggling to survive".

More generally, we believe the Working Group should have the widest possible geographic terms of reference. Slovakia also believes that the Group should be permitted to address the issue of violations of the rights of children in armed conflicts in countries monitored by the European Union. We would generally favour amending the Group's mandate to expand the scope of its work. The wider the scope of its mandate, the more extensive the breadth of its work.

With regard to the proposal for a toolkit, we believe that we should have at our disposal tools that can enable us to act in a flexible way, which is very often required for success. The choice of tools will depend upon the specific approach in a given case. We hope for progress on the toolkit before the Group's next meeting.

Slovakia supports the draft presidential statement that will be adopted today. It represents the best result possible, a succinct and very specific text that emphasizes, among other things, the importance of synergy, of action and of partnership between Member States of the United Nations and of other governmental bodies, and also with civil society organizations. That is very, very important.

Allow me to say a few words about the European Union and Slovakia. Obviously, since my country joined the European Union, nationwide awareness has grown as regards protecting children armed conflict, and the national capacities to commit to this issue have been strengthened. However, we must acknowledge that we need to further improve our methods of cooperation with our partners on various levels. We must also be more systematic in exploiting the experience of the European Union and its members. Results cannot always be achieved right away, but they are in principle guaranteed.

Before I conclude, I would in particular like to express my Government's gratitude to Ms. Coomaraswamy, Ms. Veneman, Mr. Melkert and Mr. Bannon, as well as to you, Mr. President, for your remarkable efforts to protect the rights of children in armed conflict. I also wish to thank you, Sir, for organizing and presiding over this meeting.

Allow me to end with the words of French writer Georges Bernanos: "The world will be judged by children." We will be all judged by our children. That is plain, clear and true.

Mr. Manongi (United Republic of Tanzania): We are grateful for the insightful presentation made by Ms. Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children Armed Conflict; Ms. Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF; and the representatives of the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank. We are also grateful to Minister Kalala of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Minister Torstila of Finland.

We wish to begin by placing on the record our appreciation for the good start made by Ms. Coomaraswamy since her appointment to the post of Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. We assure her of our full support and cooperation as she discharges her duty.

The Security Council has come a long way since the adoption of resolution 1261 (1999), its first resolution on the subject of children and armed conflict. Significant progress has been made since then in identifying major categories of violations against children and in recognizing the need for concerns about children in armed conflict to be included in peace negotiations, peace accords and post-conflict programmes for rehabilitation and rebuilding, as has been provided for in the most recent resolution on the subject, 1612 (2005).

We recognize that some regional organizations, in particular the Economic Community of West African States, have gone even further by adopting a peer review framework on the protection of children and by establishing a child protection unit in its secretariat. The European Union has also adopted guidelines on children and armed conflict. We welcome those initiatives and encourage their effective implementation.

We commend efforts by the United Nations family and by non-governmental organizations that have dedicated themselves to saving children affected by armed conflict. We were pleased to note reports that by 2003 thousands of child soldiers had been demobilized from armed groups and that the number of

displaced persons had dropped significantly. However, despite that encouraging news, a significant number of children are still victims of armed conflict, especially in Africa. In addition, we cannot ignore reports of the estimated 20 million children worldwide who have been forced to flee their homes in the last decade because of conflicts, or those indicating that more than 2 million have died as a direct result of those conflicts. At least 6 million children have been permanently disabled or seriously injured. Reports further estimate that between 8,000 and 10,000 children are killed or maimed by landmines every year. Furthermore, the recruitment of children into armies and militias has continued, and there are reportedly 300 thousand child soldiers in more than 30 countries around the world. That is a tragedy that needs to be stopped.

To curb that trend, Tanzania advocates a strong monitoring and reporting mechanism to ensure that appropriate measures are taken against armed groups and individuals who recruit child soldiers, including girl soldiers and girl slaves, as well as action to save those children from their ordeal, including their rehabilitation into the society and return to school. We believe that education is the key to their reintegration.

We appreciate the incorporation of the issue of children and armed conflict into the mainstream of the Council's work in peace and security, as well as its inclusion in the Council's fact-finding missions and in country-specific reports. We fully endorse the aspect of child protection as part of the mandate of peacekeeping missions in situations of armed conflict. Yet more has to be done.

More can be done by comprehensively addressing the underlying causes of the recruitment of child soldiers and child abuse in general. In the context of Africa, those are no different from the root causes of armed conflict in the first place. We therefore call for serious, collective and concerted efforts to assist African countries that are in situations of armed conflict, those in post-conflict stages, as well as neighbouring countries that are bearing the brunt of armed conflict by hosting refugees, including children. It is in that sense that we welcome the World Bank's focus on children and youth as part of our collective strategy to address that problem.

Finally, we wish to thank the French delegation for having initiated the presidential statement that we will be adopting and which my delegation is now in a position to fully support after the agreement reached among the experts.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): I would like to thank Special Representative Coomaraswamy and UNICEF Executive Director Ms. Veneman for their briefings. UNICEF rightly has a high reputation among all our publics, and we thank Ms. Veneman for her leadership.

We also pay tribute to the work of the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank, and thank Mr. Melkert and Mr. Bannon for their briefings.

I would like to associate the United Kingdom with the remarks made by the Finnish presidency of the European Union a short while ago.

Above all, I should like to welcome Radhika Coomaraswamy to her first meeting with the Security Council. She has brought much energy to her task, and it is particularly welcome that she has been able to get into the field to see the situation at first hand and to advocate for the rights of children. That is making a real difference. I particularly want to mention Ms. Coomaraswamy's visit to Uganda in June this year. The violations of the rights of children in that situation are egregious even by the awful standards that we have been briefed on today. I strongly urge the parties to that conflict to cooperate with the United Nations and to fulfil all their obligations to protect the rights of children.

Since the Council last debated this issue, we have good reason to be encouraged by the impact the Security Council is having on the situation of children in armed conflict. Through our collective efforts, continued and high-level attention has been focused on the issue. We have helped shape and agree a framework for action in resolution 1612 (2005). The two key elements of that framework — the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the Council's Working Group — will enable us to increase that impact.

The presentation to the Working Group in June of the first country report on the Democratic Republic of the Congo was an important step forward. It was very good to hear from the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo today. I look forward to the Working Group reaching early agreement on the recommendations to be passed to the relevant bodies. That will enable action to be taken, including by the

Council. I offer the United Kingdom's full support to the efforts of the French mission in advancing the efforts of the Working Group.

The pilot phase of the monitoring and reporting mechanism is now under way. It is already providing valuable information and many people have contributed to its effectiveness so far. I look forward to the review of the mechanism and to its expansion to cover all situations of armed conflict in which the rights of children are being violated.

The progress with the reporting mechanism and the Working Group is encouraging. However, as many other speakers have said today, thousands of children around the world continue to be affected by conflict. The current situation in the Middle East demonstrates just how vulnerable children are to the effects of such conflict. Ultimately, we must measure our success in terms of impact on the lives of children. The evidence suggests that naming perpetrators of grave violations against children has had an impact. However, as is clearly illustrated by the reporting the Working Group receives, that impact is limited. We have been talking about an era of application for some time now. We must do more practically to ensure that our words culminate in action to improve the lives of children.

Having an impact depends ultimately on the will and actions of the national Governments and armed groups that are subjecting children to forced recruitment and abuse. We should strengthen our resolve to hold accountable those who commit such intolerable acts.

The United Kingdom is fully committed to tackling the issue of children and armed conflict and will play a full role in the Council and its Working Group.

Finally, I would like to state that we support the presidential statement in its entirety.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, my delegation would like to thank the French presidency of the Security Council for July for its initiative of organizing this debate, which demonstrates once again the Council's resolve to end the difficulties and suffering of children affected by armed conflict.

We welcome the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. We are pleased to see that the Office is fully functional and that Ms. Coomaraswamy is already visiting the field. We support future such visits.

We also welcome the presence of the representatives of UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank at this meeting.

Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) represents a step forward in the implementation of concrete measures to increase the protection of children affected by armed conflict. We appreciate the efforts of national Governments to end crimes committed against children in conflict situations and to avoid impunity.

At the same time, we stress the work of UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations peacekeeping missions, through child protection advisers, to put into action and follow up in the field the work of the monitoring and reporting mechanism.

We also highlight the activity of civil society and non-governmental organizations, which have the difficult and dangerous task of collecting information on the abuses suffered by children and of denouncing the perpetrators. We request the greatest possible protection for them and for the relatives of the victims, who often have to suffer the consequences of such denunciations.

Regrettably, in spite of the efforts of the international community in recent years, children are still falling victim to forced recruitment and to grave violations and abuses by armed groups. This is a complex issue that must be solved through the adoption of and ample focus on political, legal and socio-economic measures, among which we stress the following.

First, it would be important for the Security Council to send a clear signal to all responsible parties that the international community is not ready to continue tolerating violations against children in conflict, including the recruitment of child soldiers. The presidential statement that the Council will adopt at the end of this debate will fulfil that objective.

Secondly, it is necessary to support the monitoring and reporting mechanism and to keep it operative in all conflict situations in order to receive more and better information on the situation of children in the field. To that end, greater political

commitment is necessary and additional resources must be allocated by Member States.

Thirdly, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict should establish better coordination with the existing sanctions committees in order to consider the possibility of imposing sanctions against those responsible for the most flagrant violations of the human rights of children in conflict situations.

Fourthly, the Working Group must continue to be active, accelerate its work and develop all aspects of its mandate, including the elaboration of recommendations on the protection of children in armed conflict to be incorporated into the drafts of the Security Council.

Fifthly, the Working Group should also consider other issues relating to the special vulnerability of children in conflict, such as the necessity of integrating all aspects of development or the need to improve the involvement of regional organizations and civil society in the Security Council's strategy, within the framework of resolution 1612 (2005).

We believe that there is nothing to stop the Working Group from considering other related issues, as long as their consideration might result in the improvement of the situation of affected children.

Sixthly, it is necessary to reinforce disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes so that the victims can have real opportunities to reintegrate into society. In that sense, we are grateful for the participation in this debate of some development agencies whose work that complement the efforts of the Security Council, as far as their mandates allow.

The final goal of all of those initiatives is the adoption of efficient measures to ensure that the conflicting parties who are responsible for committing the most flagrant violations against children comply with the resolutions of this Council in order to achieve a real improvement of the situation of children in the field.

Argentina approaches this issue from the general perspective of the promotion and protection of human rights, and can only express its concern about the increasing impact of conflict on children. That can clearly be seen in the current situation in the Middle East.

The violation of the rights of children in conflict not only affects peace and security, but also has grave consequences for the current and future development of affected countries.

The reasons for which children themselves become the targets of violence by some armed groups are many and depend on the specific circumstances of each conflict. In most cases, however, the special vulnerability of children makes them an easier target than others when it comes to increasing the number of combatants, doing forced labour or being sexually exploited. All such reasons are unacceptable. The gravity of those acts requires concerted action on the part of the international community to put an end to such abuses and to try to reintegrate the victims into their societies.

Argentina reiterates its commitment to that issue and its readiness to work for the adoption of concrete measures that will constitute an improvement in the lives of children who suffer the consequences of conflict everyday.

Ms. Tincopa (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to thank the delegation of France for organizing this debate one year after the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005). We believe that the resolution represents progress on this issue by establishing a comprehensive monitoring and reporting mechanism to ensure the protection of boys and girls affected by armed conflicts.

I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Executive Director of UNICEF, and the representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and of the World Bank for their very encouraging statements. We also encourage them to continue to work together with a view to ending the recruitment and use as soldiers of children in armed conflicts and to protecting them when they are involved in conflict, as in the current crisis in the Middle East.

Resolution 1612 (2005), together with all prior resolutions on the same topic, provides a formal and detailed structure to govern the protection of children affected by armed conflict and offers the key elements in ensuring respect for the rights of children in the

field. Peru firmly supports the universal principle that all parties to armed conflict should respect all the rights of children in all circumstances.

In that regard, we welcome the progress made since the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), mainly in the following areas. First, a new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflicts, Ms. Coomaraswamy, has been appointed. We believe that her appointment expresses the will of the international community to contribute with permanent and lasting solutions to the unacceptable situation of children affected by armed conflict.

Secondly, the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict has been launched and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict has been established under the chairmanship of France, demonstrating the Security Council's commitment to the promotion and defence of the rights of children in armed conflict. The Security Council is one of the key bodies for taking accountable and concrete action in response to the serious violations of the rights of the child.

Furthermore, I would like to make some comments that could be taken into account as we pursue the full implementation of resolution 1612 (2005). In addressing the topic of children in armed conflict, we should integrate cooperation and technical assistance to generate and increase national capacities to formulate policies to prevent human rights violations. The international community should continue to use all instruments and mechanisms available to put an end to the violations of human rights of children involved in armed conflict.

Impunity must end. Those responsible for grave abuses against children should be brought to justice. In that regard, I would like to highlight the case of Thomas Lubanga, arrested by the International Criminal Court last March for recruiting and using boys and girls as soldiers in the hostilities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That case represents important action taken against those responsible for such acts.

United Nations peacekeeping missions, international relevant bodies and non-governmental organizations should include in their mandates the provision of human rights education and training for all those working on the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism. In particular, they should include young people working towards that goal. We should also support the work being carried out by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and her visits to the field. The parties to armed conflict should cooperate with her work, as well as with that carried out by UNICEF and other relevant United Nations entities.

The Working Group of the Security Council should play an important role in the implementation of recommendations arising from the review of the reports. The full application of the recommendations will be important to prevent worse violations. The Working Group should also finalize its review of the reports of the monitoring and reporting mechanism referred to in paragraph 3 of resolution 1612 (2005); it could then consider the possibility of moving on to a second phase and examining other situations in which children are recruited and used as soldiers in hostilities or conflicts.

We should urge the donors and financial institutions to continue their support for Governments or parties involved in order to implement resolution 1612 (2005).

Before ending, I would like to note that my delegation supports the presidential statement to be adopted at the end of this debate.

Mr. Christian (Ghana): My delegation wishes to thank you, Sir, for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict, which is of particularly serious concern to us in Africa. We also thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF; and the representatives of the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank for their updates on this subject.

Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) provided a new focus and ushered in a period of greater action by the Security Council. Through the resolution, the Council emphasized the legal and physical protection needs of children and its commitment to addressing impunity by introducing effective sanctions against the perpetrators of serious crimes against children and mainstreaming child protection into the transition and post-transition priorities of Governments.

My delegation notes with appreciation the important role played by child-protection advisers in

the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the UNICEF child-protection programme staff, and other United Nations entities, including the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Population Fund, and their close engagement with civil society in building strong partnerships on the implementation and functioning of resolution 1612 (2005).

We also welcome the commendable progress achieved by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, as outlined in the report by its Chair; the appointment of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; and the ongoing implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism in the field. Despite the progress, it is crystal clear that much more remains to be done because the situation is still grim. Recent reports indicate that children not only bear the devastating effects of armed conflict, but are often deliberately targeted by parties to a conflict, non-State actors and Government military forces alike. The high incidence of the recruitment and use of child soldiers in armed forces and groups, as well as the killing, maiming and abduction of children and the widespread sexual violence against and abuse of girls, and attacks on schools and hospitals, continue to a large extent.

Children still form a high proportion of armed groups and have as yet not benefited from or participated in reintegration programmes. Obstruction of humanitarian assistance is still ongoing and remains a key concern. Even more disturbing is the fact that the serious violations committed against children are generally not investigated, or go unpunished. My delegation is of the firm belief that this is the time to isolate and apply sanctions against the recalcitrant perpetrators of such abuses. Compilation of information on violations against children will remain of little relevance if it does not serve as a trigger for action to hasten compliance with resolution 1612 (2005).

The lack of political will to fully respect applicable international rules remains a key impediment to protecting children in times of armed conflict. We note that the prime responsibility for providing protection falls upon State authorities and other non-State actors. Therefore, we reiterate the call on those parties to strictly comply with the relevant rules and principles of international human rights, refugee and humanitarian instruments and take necessary action towards the complete and unconditional release of all children in armed forces and armed groups.

My delegation further wishes to emphasize that the international community must strengthen its resolve and fight those who act with impunity and are involved in the de facto recruitment and use of child soldiers. The prosecution and conviction of those persons for such egregious crimes will serve as a long-term deterrent. In that regard, the work of the United Nations must be geared towards developing national institutions and promoting recourse to international justice.

In cases where the national legal system fails, the international community has the duty to apply the full range of available judicial mechanisms. In that respect, we consider the investigations already underway at the International Criminal Court (ICC) as positive developments. At the national level, there is also the need to build the capacity of security personnel and other legal actors, including through an increase in the human and financial resources of the concerned authorities, to strengthen their capacity to investigate and prosecute crimes against children.

Regarding the post-conflict care of affected children, we would encourage initiatives to conduct follow-ups to demobilization programmes. We wish to stress that the demobilization of children should include primary health care and psychosocial support to address their special needs.

Further, we underline the importance of sustained investment in education and skills training in order to ensure the successful reintegration of children into their communities and prevent re-recruitment. This should include employment support and income-generating projects for former combatants. Key elements include rehabilitation and the provision of school materials in order to support continued schooling for children and the provision of life and vocational skills for out-of-school students.

The effective protection of children in armed conflict requires stronger partnerships that will systematically identify the needs of children and determine who is best placed to address those needs. In

that respect, regional experience and skills should be drawn upon, as and when appropriate. Therefore, we emphasize the need for continued close cooperation between United Nations entities and regional organizations, like the African Union. In particular, it is of cardinal importance to strengthen their capacity and preparedness to augment the efforts of the United Nations in responding to the needs of the children.

We also commend efforts by the United Nations, to incorporate the protection of vulnerable groups, including children, into its peacekeeping missions. We hope the newly created Peacebuilding Commission will also pursue those objectives.

We look forward to the next report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict, which will reflect the latest developments and best practices in providing protection for children, and will facilitate the Security Council's deliberations and decision-making on the issue. The Council must move to a stage of action by ensuring that resolution 1612 (2005) is translated firmly into action on the ground.

In conclusion, my delegation states its support for the presidential statement on the subject.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): First, I wish to thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, and the representatives of the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank, for their briefings and contributions to the debate. I pay special tribute to UNICEF for its invaluable work for children in the world under the strong leadership of Ann Veneman.

(*spoke in French*)

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on children and armed conflict. France, as the chairman of the Security Council Working Group on the subject, has shown its commitment and genuine leadership on the issue, which we greatly appreciate.

Since the landmark report of Graca Machel in 1996, the focus of the international community on the promotion and the protection of the rights of children affected by armed conflict has greatly increased. In the last 10 years, the Security Council has played an important role concerning the issue, and its adoption of resolution 1612 (2005) to establish a monitoring and reporting mechanism marked another important step forward in addressing the issue more effectively.

It is reported that, since 2003, over 14 million children have been forcibly displaced within and outside their home countries, and between 8,000 and 10,000 children are killed or maimed every year as a result of landmines. Those are saddening figures and show that the international community still has much to do for the protection of children from forcible recruitment, murder, abduction or sexual exploitation.

My Government welcomes the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism, pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005), in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Somalia and the Sudan. We also welcome the fact that similar mechanisms are being established in Sri Lanka and Nepal. We strongly hope that the information given by these mechanisms will provide us with an objective and reliable picture of the situation of children under armed conflict and thereby contribute as the basis for appropriate actions to be taken.

Japan appreciates and supports the activities of the Working Group established under resolution 1612 (2005), which is actively implementing its mandate under the strong chairmanship of the French delegation. As its important first step, the Group reviewed the first report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in June (S/2006/389). The report is based on the information given by the Working Group. Japan considers it important that the Working Group consult closely with the countries concerned in order to ensure steady progress toward solving the problems of those countries. We will participate actively in the Working Group to make recommendations from the Group to the Security Council.

Japan is deeply concerned about the situation of children who are drafted or abducted by parties involved in armed conflict and who are forced to engage in fighting or mobilized to work for combatants. Child soldiers are deprived of the opportunity to receive an education and cannot experience sound growth.

In addition, as many child soldiers have lost their parents or are unable to obtain appropriate assistance for reintegration into their communities, they are often pressed into service once again by armed forces and

groups. Thus, special attention should be given to reintegration assistance programmes as part of the process of disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating child soldiers.

Japan advocates the concept of human security to protect and empower ordinary people, especially those who are most vulnerable. In line with that concept, my Government has extended assistance for the consolidation of peace, supporting the projects of such international organizations as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNICEF, principally in Africa and Asia. There are approximately 120,000 ex-child soldiers in Africa and most are said to be in the Great Lakes region. We regard it as of the highest importance to help children associated with armed forces and groups return and be reintegrated into their families and communities.

My Government has supported such projects as a rehabilitation programme for ex-child soldiers in the Great Lakes region through UNDP and a community support programme in Liberia in 2006. We also supported the interim disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme for the Sudan in 2005.

In conclusion, we would like to stress once again that the issue of children and armed conflict should be a priority for the international community, and it is especially important to mainstream it into all the policies and programmes of the United Nations system.

For its part, Japan will continue to work closely with other Member States, the United Nations system — including the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights — national organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society, to improve the situation of children caught in the midst of armed conflict.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, the Chinese delegation would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy; the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Veneman; the representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Mr. Melkert; and the World Bank representative, Mr. Bannon, for their briefings.

Children are the future and the hope of mankind. The safety, survival and development of children are prerequisites for human progress and have a direct bearing on the future and destiny of a nation and its citizens. However, it is regrettable that, at present, children in more than 30 countries around the world are being harmed in various ways by armed conflicts. Some are killed in merciless wars; others are forced into armed conflicts as a means of waging war; still others are kidnapped or subject to various forms of physical abuse. Such children rightfully belong in classrooms, studying and acquiring knowledge. Instead, they have become victims of armed conflicts. Of particular note is that the recent sudden escalation of the conflict between Lebanon and Israel has resulted in the deaths of many children in aerial and artillery bombardments, which is shocking to us. We strongly appeal to the parties concerned to abide strictly by international humanitarian law; to avoid hurting the innocent, particularly children; and to provide every facility and help for the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

All countries and parties have the obligation to do their utmost to protect children from being harmed in armed conflict. In recent years, the United Nations has taken a number of measures to promote the protection of children in armed conflict, and positive results have been achieved. Over the past seven years, the Security Council has adopted six consecutive resolutions that provide a comparatively sound framework for the protection of children in armed conflict. Treating the protection of children as an important aspect of their operations, some United Nations peacekeeping missions have given full consideration to the special needs of children in helping host countries in their disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. Some peace agreements concluded with the facilitation and participation of the United Nations also include provisions for protecting children. Countries concerned have taken action to provide guarantees for the protection of children through legislation.

To a certain extent, such measures have reduced the harm that armed conflict inflicts on children and are commendable. China is deeply concerned that armed conflict in various regions of the world causes harm to children. We support all efforts made by the United Nations, including the Security Council, to

promote the protection of children in armed conflict. In that regard, I wish to emphasize the following points.

First, the Security Council should step up its efforts to prevent conflict and maintain peace. Stemming and reducing armed conflicts at their source would protect children by creating the objective conditions for peace. The Security Council bears the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, and no existing mechanism can replace it. As a vulnerable group, children are most susceptible to being harmed in various ways in any outbreak of armed conflict. The Security Council should therefore seek to resolve conflicts and take effective measures within its mandate to reduce the number of armed conflicts. At the same time, the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations should be strengthened in an effort to improve the humanitarian situation in conflict areas. Only when various groups, including children and civilians, enjoy a more secure living environment will it be possible to avoid many tragedies at their source.

Secondly, when dealing with the issue of children and armed conflict, we should always respect and support the role played by the Governments of the countries concerned. In its third paragraph, resolution 1612 (2005) stresses

> "the primary role of national Governments in providing effective protection and relief to all children affected by armed conflicts".

The operative part of that resolution also makes repeated reference to the important role of the Governments of the countries concerned. Conflict situations have their own specificities and complex causes. Therefore, it is imperative to cooperate with the Governments concerned in using the monitoring and reporting mechanism to collect information and carry out work on the ground in a concerted effort to avoid harming children in armed conflict. At present, many national Governments in conflict situations have adopted various strategies and plans prohibiting the recruitment of child soldiers and protecting children affected by armed conflict. All these factors should be taken into consideration when carrying out international cooperation in this field.

Thirdly, the work of the monitoring and reporting mechanism of the Security Council on children and armed conflict and that of the Working Group should be further improved and enhanced. Since its establishment in accordance with resolution 1612 (2005) more than a year ago, some progress has been made in the functioning of the mechanism. We hope that the Security Council can analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the mechanism so that improvements can be made in the next stage of its work.

The primary objective of the mechanism is to collect information. It is up to the Working Group to discuss and agree on specific actions. Under the coordination of the French chairmanship, the Working Group has carried out activities over the past year. Consensus has been reached on such areas as the terms of reference and the programme of work. Substantive work has already begun. China expects the Working Group, through cooperation and constructive discussion, to utilize its expertise in this area and put forward effective suggestions on the protection of children in armed conflict.

Fourthly, the protection of children in armed conflict is an endeavour on a large scale that calls for the collective efforts of all parties concerned. China appreciates the work done by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, including the cooperation she has engaged in with the Governments concerned. At the same time, the United Nations specialized agencies, including UNICEF, and the Resident Offices of the United Nations system also have important responsibilities of their own in this field.

China believes that all parties concerned should strengthen their coordination and cooperation to provide concerted assistance to the countries involved to build up their capacity to protect children. In addition, certain civil society organizations and humanitarian organizations have also participated in numerous efforts to protect children, sometimes operating in very dangerous environments. We would like to recognize their hard work, and we hope that they will abide by the principles of justice, neutrality and humanitarianism in helping to advance local peace processes.

Lastly, China once again urges the parties to all armed conflicts to genuinely discharge their responsibilities to respect and protect the rights of children. The international community, while facilitating post-conflict reconstruction, should give priority to resolving such issues as the return of children to their families, to schools and to their society, and provide adequate resources to that end.

The protection of children has always been a focus of the work of the Government of China, which ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict as early as 2002. We call on additional countries to accede to the Protocol, and we hope that the Protocol's provisions concerning the age limit for conscription will be observed.

China hopes that, with the efforts of all parties, a favourable environment will be created for children all over the world so that they can live and grow up and enjoy a bright future.

Ms. Sanders (United States of America): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting today and for your leadership on this issue. I wish also to thank the Secretary-General; the Special Representative on children and armed conflict, Ms. Coomaraswamy; and UNICEF head Ann Veneman for the energy they have devoted to addressing the serious problem of children and armed conflict. It is important that the Security Council, other relevant United Nations entities and our Governments, as Member States, keep the issue of children and armed conflict in our focus.

The United States also thanks you, Mr. President, and your Security Council team for having taken the lead in establishing the Security Council Working Group on children and armed conflict.

Several meetings have been held this year, and we look forward to working on the recommendations that the Group will provide in future. We also look forward to the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism called for by resolution 1612 (2005).

The United States recognizes the agonizing consequences of using children in armed conflict in all regions of the world where this problem exists. The use of child soldiers, in violation of applicable international law, is contributing to violence and great suffering. Such agonizing consequences are particularly severe in southern Sudan and northern Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Colombia and Burma.

Burma is thought to have the largest number of child soldiers in the world. Human Rights Watch has documented the widespread forced recruitment of boys as young as 11 by Burma's national army. Children are routinely picked off the streets, forced into the army and never see their families again. Many are forced to fight against armed ethnic opposition groups and carry out human rights abuses such as rounding up villagers for forced labour, burning houses, and even massacring civilians. Armed opposition groups also recruit children, though in far smaller numbers.

Although there appears to have been a significant reduction in the unlawful recruitment and use of children during the past 12 months, children continue to be the victims of violence and abuse by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda, southern Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The LRA has waged a civil war against the Government of Uganda since the mid-1980s and has abducted thousands of children from northern Uganda to serve as soldiers. Children are forced to participate in acts of extreme violence and are often compelled to help beat or hack to death fellow child captives who have attempted to escape. Girls as young as 12 are given to commanders as "wives". Some abducted children have managed to escape, while others have died from disease, maltreatment or combat wounds.

Colombia's children have long been caught up in that country's devastating conflict, including significant numbers who are currently being used as soldiers by armed groups, paramilitaries and militias. Boys and girls, some as young as 8 years old, are often recruited forcibly and used as kidnappers, guards, cooks, sexual companions or slaves, or are used for placing and removing bombs. Girls in armed groups and paramilitaries are particularly at risk of sexual abuse.

The United States supports the Secretary-General's commitment to stop continued violations and abuses against children, including recruiting or using child soldiers in violation of applicable international law, unprovoked attacks targeting schools or hospitals, the maiming and killing of children, child abduction, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and unwarranted denial of humanitarian access. As an important element of an effort to eliminate such activities, we welcome effective monitoring and reporting of all such violations.

On a positive note, during 2006 two States acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. This international instrument works

most directly to address the problem we are discussing today. The United States ratified the Protocol on 23 December 2002, and there are now a total of 107 States parties to the Protocol. This demonstrates important leadership on the effort to end the use of child soldiers in violation of applicable international law.

Again, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the work that you and your team have accomplished on this issue. My delegation looks forward to working with you and other members here to address the problem of children and armed conflict.

Mrs. Telalian (Greece): Mr. President, I would like to join previous speakers in thanking you for having organized this timely and open debate on an issue that has drawn international attention, particularly during the last few days, in view of the escalating violence in the Middle East, which has a great impact on the lives of innocent children. We strongly appeal to all the parties involved to put an end to this suffering.

I wish also to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Veneman, for their informative briefings.

Greece fully associates itself with the statement made earlier by the Secretary of State of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland on behalf of the European Union, and with the statement to be made later by Slovenia on behalf of the Human Security Network.

At this stage, I would like to make some additional remarks.

Since the 1996 Graça Machel report on the impact of armed conflict on children, the issue has attained international visibility and prominence. Significant progress has been made, especially in the field of international standard-setting, that recognizes the human rights and freedoms of children in armed conflict. The Security Council has contributed to that effect with the adoption of six resolutions since 1999.

However, despite all of those efforts, thousands of children continue to be killed and maimed and to bear the full brunt of armed conflict and violence, as pointed out earlier by Ms. Coomaraswamy. Defenceless children are raped or abducted, in violation of the most basic principles of international law, and children are still forcibly recruited into armies and militias, with serious implications for long-term regional and international stability. As has been reported by United Nations humanitarian agencies, as a result of limited or no humanitarian access, the number of children who are dying in silence every day in many refugee camps in Africa from disease and malnutrition exceeds emergency thresholds.

All of the foregoing indicates that there is still a lot to be done. It is important that we focus our attention on the effective implementation of existing international instruments. Protecting children in armed conflict is, however, a very complex issue. A variety of measures is required in order to deal with it effectively. In that respect, the political will and active involvement of national Governments is a necessary precondition. If, however, national Governments lack the capacity or will to do so, it is important for the humanitarian community to create the necessary conditions and environment to deter violence.

At the same time, States should address prolonged impunity, as it aggravates violence. Those responsible for serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed against children should be brought to justice, in order to secure justice and dignity for victims. In that respect, we would like to emphasize that the ongoing investigations of the International Criminal Court can play a crucial role in dealing with accountability for international crimes against children.

Since the Council's last open debate on children and armed conflict, which was organized by Benin in February 2005 (S/PV.5129 and 5129 (Resumption 1)), considerable developments have taken place that have paved the way for a realistic approach to further promoting the protection of children in armed conflict. In particular, the monitoring and reporting mechanism established through resolution 1612 (2005) in July 2005 constitutes a major step towards implementing a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to yield reliable reports on the recruitment of children and other abuses committed against children.

Work is also in progress to address the problems in question, including the elaboration of specific action plans. That information — gathered through close cooperation among national Governments, United Nations entities and civil society actors — is an essential element for formulating effective measures,

as they will be tailored to the specific needs and realities on the ground. The implementation of that mechanism is at an early stage, but we are confident that it will serve the purpose of its establishment, with the full support of national Governments and the international community.

The second important development was the establishment of the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, under the skilful chairmanship of France. The proceedings of its initial four meetings, since November 2005, have been fruitful. I would like to thank your country, Mr. President, for its excellent report on the activities of the Working Group (see S/2006/497, annex). Let me just mention that, on 26 June, the Working Group discussed the first report of the monitoring and reporting mechanism set up in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The report is well documented and proves the usefulness of the mechanism in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We look forward to participating in the Working Group's consultations to develop follow-up recommendations to the Council.

Finding lasting solutions to the problems facing children in armed conflict requires hard work, cooperation and coordinated activities on the national, regional and international levels. A dialogue with all parties to an armed conflict is also needed. In that respect, the role of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and of UNICEF is commendable.

Furthermore, effective peacebuilding strategies should be developed in post-conflict societies in order to prevent them from relapsing into future conflicts. In that respect, it is essential that all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes include provisions to address the specific needs of children associated with armed groups, such as reunification with their families, medical support, education and vocational training. The newly established Peacebuilding Commission can adequately contribute to that end.

We also support the emphasis of the United Nations Development Programme on developing the three Es, as was mentioned earlier by Mr. Melkert.

In conclusion, I want to underline that Greece is strongly committed to the protection of children affected by armed conflict and firmly supports all the relevant efforts of the Security Council to ensure enhanced protection for children living in the midst of conflict around the world. We also support the draft presidential statement that the Council is ready to adopt.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to express our thanks to the Government of the French Republic and to Ambassador Jean-Marc de La Sablière, whose vitality, commitment and passion on this question have enhanced its importance in the Security Council. The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict has worked diligently since its inception last year and has made progress under the leadership of France.

We would also like to pay tribute to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for her efforts during the short period since she assumed her functions. Her Office on Children and Armed Conflict has undertaken some praiseworthy work. It is encouraging to see such organizations as the European Union, the Organization of American States, the African Union, the Commonwealth, the G-8, the Economic Community of West African States and others inscribing the question of children in armed conflict on their agendas.

The question of children in armed conflict has assumed its proper place in the discussions and consultations of the Security Council, which has adopted several resolutions on the subject that have provided a proper framework that has enabled the international community to make some progress. In that regard, we would like to welcome the plan of action for systematic and comprehensive monitoring, reporting and compliance, which provides for the gathering of objective, accurate and reliable information.

In spite all of that concern, numerous atrocities continue to be committed against children in many parts of the world. Such a situation cannot be ignored. We should accord it greater attention.

The current conditions and events impose on us a heavy responsibility vis-à-vis children, especially those who suffer the most. It is our belief that there is no greater suffering than the suffering of innocent children in the massacre that is now taking place in Lebanon. For the past two weeks, children have been subjected to murder and maiming. They have been denied humanitarian relief, and their hospitals and schools have been hit. All of that violates the rights of children

under resolution 1612 (2005), the Convention on the Rights of the Child and numerous other international conventions, which time limits do not permit me to cite.

It is deplorable that children, who are not responsible for the mistakes of adults, should suffer destruction, devastation and displacement. It would be wrong for us to shirk our responsibilities; there is no justification for that. The critical situation in which children, women and families find themselves suffering — including displacement, upheaval and the risks of exploitation and abuse — makes it incumbent upon us to respond promptly to the appeals for relief launched by Lebanon.

We recognize the importance of concrete results in the area of vision, awareness and initiatives regarding the question of children affected by armed conflict. We must also think creatively to develop the plan of action and the substantive framework regarding children in armed conflict into concrete initiatives.

The State of Qatar proposes the following for consideration. First, we should increase coordination between the Working Group and the subsidiary organs of the Council to punish the perpetrators of crimes against children. Secondly, we must increase the number child-protection advisers in peacekeeping operations. Following the success of that first phase in a limited number of regional situations, it is important that such protection be extended to other situations. Thirdly, there is a need to formulate a comprehensive strategy to protect children affected by armed conflict. In that context, it would be appropriate for the Security Council to adopt a new approach or strategic framework focusing on education for the protection of children in armed conflict.

Post-conflict peacebuilding requires an integrated framework to provide sustainable education. Educational systems not only educate the young, but also build nations and provide generations with a common identity. The State of Qatar believes that it is of the utmost importance to post-conflict peacebuilding that an investment be made in education to lay the foundations for lasting peace and stamp out the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Moreover, education is essential and should be at the heart of rehabilitation and reintegration.

In conclusion, we ought never to forget that children are our greatest hope and most precious resource in rebuilding communities affected by armed conflict and the achievement of peace, security and sustainable development. The regrettable situation of children in the Middle East, particularly those in Lebanon and the occupied Palestinian territories, represents a test for the new Working Group and its new bureau, which possesses considerable experience. We look forward to hearing from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict about her intended actions vis-à-vis partners on the ground and their potential contribution to increasing the resources currently available.

Mr. Rogachev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The protection of civilians in armed conflict and post-conflict situations continues to be at the centre of attention of the United Nations and its Security Council. At the same time, we do not absolve Governments of their primary responsibility for ensuring and protecting the rights of children in their own countries.

Resolution 1612 (2005) laid out new systemic bases for ensuring the protection of children in armed conflict and in post-conflict reconstruction. Specific results include the launching of the monitoring and reporting mechanism in that field and the beginning of work by the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. It is now necessary to ensure the effective functioning of those combined instruments and to guarantee the reliability and integrity of the information being received by the Security Council through the multi-tier mechanism from elements of the reporting and monitoring mechanism on the ground.

The deployment of the mechanism in conflict-affected countries is ongoing and beginning to generate its initial results. However, it is important that the process be implemented in strict compliance with resolution 1612 (2005), which provides for the priority establishment of the mechanism in situations on the Council's agenda. We look forward to the conclusions of the independent review of the functioning of the mechanism, which should give us a clear picture of what has been done and what remains to be done if the system is to operate effectively.

The Council's new Working Group is off to a good start, to the great credit of the President of the Security Council and our colleagues in the French

mission. The core documents regulating the activities of the Group have been agreed. The first report of the Secretary-General on the situation of children in a specific situation has been considered, and information is being regularly received from the monitoring and reporting mechanism. We are confident that, under the leadership of Permanent Representative De La Sablière, the Working Group will continue to operate in a spirit of cooperation and focus on constructive measures.

With respect to plans for the Group's future work, we feel that it must focus its attention primarily on the most urgent and largest-scale situations of armed conflict, and not only in Africa. That will require an impartial and non-selective approach, as well as strict compliance with the principles of the United Nations humanitarian activities. Unfortunately, the current world situation gives us every reason for serious concern in that context, as particularly reaffirmed in the 20 July statement of Ms. Coomaraswamy.

The Security Council must support the implementation of the entire range of aforementioned tasks, with a key role to be played by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict. We welcome the appointment to that post of Ms. Coomaraswamy and note her highly proactive and balanced approach in the fulfilment of her mandate. The latter is especially relevant in the context of one highly important aspect of her work — visits to countries where children suffer most in conflict.

Closest to suffering children are those working in the field, including Government structures, peacekeepers and civil society representatives. We expect to see results from the appointment to peacekeeping missions of child-protection advisers. We must support the implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes for child soldiers, ensure humanitarian access to conflict zones, maintain the civilian nature of camps for refugees and internally displaced persons, and end the sexual exploitation of children.

In the context of preventing violence, key elements include the fight against impunity and bringing to justice all those who are guilty of crimes against children.

The protection of children is system-wide. Such work must be well coordinated in order to enhance its effectiveness and avoid redundancy. There is a need for a streamlined division of labour between United Nations bodies, in accordance with the Organization's Charter, and other international legal instruments. Core United Nations agencies and programmes, as well as other international and regional organizations, must be involved in that process.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): Let me begin by thanking you, Sir, for convening this meeting on children affected by armed conflicts. Without the tireless efforts of France, we would not have been able to secure the positive developments that have taken place since our last debate on the issue.

I also want to express my appreciation for the introductory statements made this morning by the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the Executive Director of UNICEF, the Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and the representative of the World Bank.

Let me also align Denmark with the statement that was delivered by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

With the adoption of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), we managed to achieve what many had already discarded as impossible: to propel the subject of a thematic debate from an issue of general, if somewhat uncommitted concern to a matter with very concrete and operational implications for the work of the Security Council.

By now, a monitoring and reporting mechanism on children has been established in a number of conflict situations. Systematic and reliable information is already pouring into the newly established Security Council Working Group, which will shortly present its first recommendations to the Council, initially on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and later in the year on other situations of concern, including the Sudan, Sri Lanka and Somalia.

Those developments constitute substantial progress that will make a real difference in the daily lives of thousands of children. The process illustrates that, when political determination is present in the Council, our efforts can move beyond mere rhetorical declarations. We hope that all Council members will keep this in mind as we move forward on other related issues, including the protection of civilians and women, peace and security.

As we look at the established framework for child protection, it is clear that some aspects need to be reviewed in the future. The scope of both the monitoring and reporting mechanism and of the Working Group must, as envisaged in resolution 1612 (2005), be made truly thematic in nature, covering all situations of concern. Furthermore, the Security Council must reaffirm its willingness to use all tools at its disposal and not shy away, even if the situation calls for more difficult measures, such as sanctions, referral of violators to international courts or stronger enforcement of peacekeeping mandates to protect children.

However, the immediate objective for the next 12 months should be to develop the established protection framework for children. Denmark looks forward to engaging in substantial discussion on future reports presented to the Working Group and to translating these discussions into concrete results on the ground.

With the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), the Security Council clearly underlined the imperative of providing protection for children affected by armed conflict. A broad variety of actors must be involved to ensure this overarching objective. First of all, it should by now be clear that the eyes of the international community rest firmly on the actions of all parties involved in armed conflict, be it in Darfur, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, northern Uganda or Sri Lanka. All parties must and will be held accountable for failure to fulfil their obligations to end all violations and abuses committed against children. To achieve progress, it will be key to develop concrete action plans at the national level to halt the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

Secondly, the Council expects national Governments to do their utmost to facilitate the establishment of the protection framework, cooperate with national monitoring and reporting task forces and support dialogue between warring parties. Allow me in this regard to commend the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sri Lanka and Uganda for their constructive cooperation with the Working Group. We also commend the Special Representative and UNICEF on the establishment of national monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

Thirdly, I would like to underline that the active involvement of civil society is essential. Without the dedicated work and courage of many national and international non-governmental organizations on the ground, it would not be practically possible to establish and maintain the protection framework for children in armed conflict.

Finally, it has been extremely encouraging to witness the strengthened cooperation between UNICEF and the Special Representative's office. We strongly support this expanded partnership, which has been paramount in achieving the results in front of us today.

The past 12 months have clearly demonstrated that, when the Security Council displays the necessary political will, genuine advances can be achieved in the protection of children affected by armed conflict. Such determination will inevitably translate into a greater willingness by donors to provide the adequate resources, allowing all involved to reinvigorate their efforts in areas where support is needed. One of these key areas is the establishment of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, with a greater focus on the specific needs of girls affected by armed conflict.

For the remaining part of its tenure on the Council and beyond, Denmark will continue to provide all possible support to this important process. The protection of children affected by armed conflict is integrated as a crosscutting theme in Danish development assistance. We believe that, as a minimum, children should be provided access to the basic requirements necessary for them to exploit their full potential as human beings. Key among these are education, health and, in particular, peace and security of the person.

Mr. Biaboroh-Iboro (Congo) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, my delegation is grateful to you for having taken this welcome initiative to organize a debate on children and armed conflict in your dual capacity as President of the Security Council for the current month and as Chair of the Working Group of the Council on children and armed conflict, established by resolution 1612 (2005). I would also like to congratulate Ms. Coomaraswamy for the work she has done as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and thank her for her presentation on children and armed conflict. I would like to assure her of my delegation's cooperation in the exercise of her new duties, and we realize how broad they are. Finally, we thank Ms. Veneman, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), for the

information she has made available to us. My delegation would like to congratulate UNICEF as a United Nations agency for the important role that it has always played for children. My thanks also go to the representatives of the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank.

Just one year after the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), my delegation is happy to note the progress that has been made in its implementation. We were very interested to note the effective start of the activities of the Working Group on children and armed conflict, which has taken the form of producing working documents. These include the terms of reference, the work programme for 2006 and the guidelines for the reports of the Secretary-General to the Working Group. They also include the establishment in a growing number of countries of monitoring and reporting mechanisms relating to children and armed conflict, the nomination of a new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the issuance of the first report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict with reference to a specific country, in this case the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Having been the theatre of successive civil wars from 1993 to 2002, my country is aware of the heavy debt paid by children who have been exposed to insecurity and vulnerability, rape, pillaging, torture, killings and consumption of drugs, among other things. This is why my delegation welcomes all resolutions adopted by the Security Council to protect children in armed conflict, dating back to the 1949 Geneva Conventions. The Council's commitment to this fight since 1998 has been translated into various resolutions, among them resolution 1612 (2005). Thanks to the Council's action and the putting into place of various forms of protection for children in armed conflict, this is now an integral part of the United Nations peacekeeping missions.

Many challenges remain, and today's debate brings hope, because it bears witness to the universal awareness of the urgency of implementing a monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict through concerted action on the part of the international community, with a view to attenuating the consequences of war on children.

My delegation recognizes the overwhelming need for the Council to move on to the application of its decisions by adopting specific measures to protect children in armed conflict. To this end, our efforts could be based on the following areas. We could examine information relating to the commitments made and the progress accomplished to end the recruitment and use of children and other violations committed against them in situations of armed conflict. We could also strengthen United Nations humanitarian activities and guarantee, in all circumstances, the safety of those responsible for implementing the mechanism in the field. Dialogue can be encouraged in the field between parties to the conflict, in order to avoid possible suspicion about the credibility of the mechanism and the United Nations agencies in charge of its implementation.

The mechanism should be gradually refined and its reports should be part of a regular follow-up by the Council. The fight against the impunity of those who violate the rights of the child must be supported. Stronger measures must be taken in the area of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Particularly with regard to children, it is essential to ensure lasting integration by stressing education and rehabilitation, especially psychosocial rehabilitation, of former child soldiers. Cooperation between international, regional and national organizations for the protection of children affected by armed conflict should be strengthened.

The direct role of the Security Council in the area of the protection of children as part of its responsibility to maintain international peace and security is now well established. We must act in the better interests of the child. From that point of view, the mechanism must not simply be a system to produce documents but must be a framework for the application of specific and effective measures to help child soldiers who are displaced, or refugees or victims of sexual violence or any other form of violence.

I would not want to conclude before expressing some wishes of my delegation. The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict should present, in a reasonably short period, recommendations based on the first report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2006/389). That country is preparing for its first democratic elections after a long transitional period and deserves sustained attention on the part of the international community, in particular with regard to the situation of children. My delegation would also

like affected States and Governments to continue to benefit from international aid in their efforts to meet their obligations in the area of the protection of children in conflict or post-conflict situations. Also, the international community should provide the necessary resources to support the reintegration of children into their original communities.

Finally, my delegation supports the draft presidential statement on children and armed conflict proposed by the French delegation.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

Today, as we meet for this session, how can we not think first of the children in Lebanon, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories — innocent victims in a conflict that they have nothing to do with?

I am also thinking beyond them, of the 300,000 children now taking part in armed conflicts across the world, and many more still suffer from such conflicts. It is an unacceptable state of affairs. The children, often very young — forcibly recruited or volunteers out of desperation, soldiers, scouts, spies, servants or sexual slaves, victims of indiscriminate attacks — have in turn witnessed violence, been forced to commit violence and have been victims of violence. Nearly half of them are girls, often single mothers. When the fighting is over the children, even when liberated, often live on the margins of society. Without reintegration, they are potential factors in the resurgence of crises.

The Security Council assumed its responsibilities in taking up this question in 1999. On the initiative of France, and also Benin in 2005, the Council adopted a series of resolutions that progressively increased pressure on the perpetrators of serious violations of the rights of the child. No other subject on the Council's agenda has received so much sustained and operational attention.

Today we have all the instruments needed to combat the scourge. First, precise standards exist, specifically the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Second Optional Protocol, as well as the Rome Statute. The international community also identified best practices for the demobilization and reintegration of children in their communities through the Cape Town Principles, which will be revised and completed in Paris at the end of the year.

Secondly, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNICEF are working together to combat abuses and protect children, each with due respect for the identity and mandate of the other, in close consultation with other actors in the United Nations system.

Thirdly, a monitoring network has been set up in several countries in conflict, making it possible to collect, verify and synthesize information: this is the monitoring and reporting mechanism launched by resolution 1612 (2005) in July 2005. I would like to pay tribute to the dedication and courage of the actors in the field, especially the child protection advisers in peacekeeping operations, UNICEF agents and the humanitarian workers of the non-governmental organizations who sustain this mechanism, sometimes at risk of their lives. Without them, nothing would be possible.

Fourthly, impunity is shrinking for those who perpetrate crimes against children. The arrest of Thomas Lubanga and his transfer to the International Criminal Court has made an impression, with good reason.

Last but not least, the Security Council follows this matter in detail on a regular basis in the Working Group established under resolution 1612 (2005). France is honoured to chair that group. UNICEF and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General are closely involved in its activity. Its first report on its activities has just been published (see S/2006/497, annex).

As Chairman of the Working Group, I can say that it was up and running in the space of a few months. It adopted all the requisite decisions for functioning well, including its terms of reference and a detailed programme of work. We are on the verge of agreeing on a toolkit. The Working Group played a useful role in the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. It backed Ms. Coomaraswamy's visits in the field and played a key role in the establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism in resolution 1612 (2005). We await with much interest Ms Coomaraswamy's first general report in November.

At its meeting on 26 June last, the Working Group reached a new stage. It examined in detail the situation of children in a specific armed conflict, in this case in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We will have occasion to consider other situations between now and the end of the year, and we will be submitting recommendations to the Security Council.

The current period therefore constitutes a real test for the Working Group, even as children continue to suffer in the field. We must redouble our efforts to reduce the gap between our action here and its tangible effects in conflict situations.

How are we to eliminate the gap and further strengthen the effectiveness of our actions? First, we must better publicize what the Security Council is doing, that is one of the objectives of our debate today. Next, we must underscore our wish to encourage and provide concrete support, again and always, to cooperation between the United Nations and the parties exploiting children. Ms. Coomaraswamy's first visit to the field — to Uganda — was very constructive in that regard. Other visits are due to follow shortly. Cooperation is our priority. However, let no one doubt our vigilance vis-à-vis all those who fuel the vicious circle of violence. The Council must be ready, as explicitly stated in its resolutions, to use the full arsenal of available measures to punish those who defy its authority by refusing to comply with its resolutions.

Lastly, we must work more on the link between security and development. The absence of a future for children undermines all our efforts in prevention and demobilization. That is why we wanted to involve in this meeting actors in development, without whose support there can be no lasting success. France, for its part, will make a further contribution of €5 million to support the UNICEF action plan and the activities of the Special Representative in implementation of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). Technical assistants will be deployed in the regions most concerned by this question. The first group of assistants will be based in the Great Lakes region to help the national commissions tasked with demobilization and reintegration of children.

I resume my functions as President of the Council. The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Canada, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Laurin (Canada) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of Canada, I would like to thank France for having organized this important debate, for which we are grateful.

(*spoke in English*)

This open debate on Children in Armed Conflict provides an important opportunity, one year after the adoption of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), to advance implementation of the resolution. To fulfil our obligations to protect girls and boys in war-torn and post-conflict societies requires the collaboration of the entire international community. The Security Council has a pivotal role to play in ensuring that the commitments made are fulfilled.

Canada encourages the continued commitment of States to the Security Council resolutions on children in armed conflict. We call on Member States to continue their support for the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and encourage those that have not done so to ratify the Protocol. Canada calls on the international community to support the work of the International Criminal Court as it continues to seek to bring to justice those who perpetrate serious international crimes, including those committed against children. The transfer of Thomas Lubanga from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to The Hague for trial is an important step in combating impunity.

In the past, a lack of accurate and verifiable information concerning atrocities being committed was too often an excuse for inaction. Resolution 1612 (2005) recognized this deficit. It represents an important step towards carrying out effective measures against the use of child soldiers, and has set in motion a groundbreaking effort to coordinate the collection of information on violations and violators in specific countries and ensure their accountability.

We must work together to ensure that the mechanism is operational, that it is inclusive and coordinated among the different actors involved and that it is accountable. The goal of monitoring and reporting activities is not to collect information for periodic reports, but to stop violations of the rights of children, to get timely action in cases where violations have been committed and to end impunity.

Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) highlights in several places the Security Council's deep concern over the lack of progress in the implementation of previous resolutions. The new mechanisms were adopted to bridge the gap between international norms and the grim reality faced by too many children caught in armed conflicts. Canada welcomes the creation of the Security Council Working Group as an opportunity to translate the commitment of the Council into the development of more effective strategies in specific situations. We call on the United

Nations to make maximum use of its national action plans to create incentives, as well as punitive measures, with time-bound, progressive targets and measurable results. This alternative approach should make the employment of progressively more robust measures viable.

(*spoke in French*)

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on children in armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo and encourage the Working Group to respond with concrete recommendations for action. Canada encourages the Council to apply targeted and graduated measures as mandated in resolution 1612 (2005) against parties to conflict who continue to commit atrocities against children. As an incentive for compliance with Security Council resolutions and increased public accountability and transparency, we would also ask the Council to use all tools at its disposal, including the mandating of peacekeeping missions and the continued naming of violators, even if that is not on the Security Council agenda.

Canada welcomes the naming of a new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, and applauds her recent visits to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. Northern Uganda is a good example of a situation that is not on the Security Council's agenda but where there are grave abuses against children and, more generally, against civilians. Canada also continues to call upon the Security Council to put this situation on its agenda. Moreover, we encourage the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to continue her work aimed at ending the recruitment and abduction of children by the Lord's Resistance Army and at working with Uganda in an effort to bring about lasting improvement in the situation of children and civilians in this region. Canada once again urges the Security Council to consider measures to deal with the ongoing abuses and the deplorable humanitarian situation in northern Uganda.

For Canada, the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005) should not be limited to the urgent task of halting the grave violations against children in ongoing armed conflicts. It is also a test of the Security Council's willingness and its capacity to translate the worthy objectives of resolutions on the subject into practical action. For these same challenges — those of effective monitoring and reporting, of consistent follow-up in peacekeeping mandates, of the adoption of country-specific resolutions, of the employment of targeted measures in the face of ongoing violations — are equally relevant to the broader protection of civilians and women, peace and security agendas.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Kariyawasam (Sri Lanka): At the outset, let me convey my appreciation to you for the opportunity given to address this meeting of the Security Council which commemorates the first anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict. The Government and people of Sri Lanka, having experienced the bane of a terrorist group recruiting children for armed conflict, are indeed grateful to France for her initiative in bringing to the forefront the issue of children and armed conflict.

I am indeed pleased to note the presence of Dr. Radhika Coomaraswamy, a distinguished Sri Lankan. Her dedicated contribution to a cause that we in Sri Lanka are deeply committed to is indeed heartening.

Children are our future. It is the responsibility of each State, and indeed, the international community, to protect them and to promote their welfare to ensure that their childhood is spent with proper care, not with undue danger, for children are vulnerable, less able to defend themselves and are therefore subject to easy abuse in many ways. The fate of innocent children caught in armed conflict is one of the most serious concerns before us today. Forcible conscription of children into armed conflict by armed groups stands as one of the most abominable crimes of our day.

While the Convention on the Rights of the Child stands as a beacon in international efforts to protect children, the adoption of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) a year ago marks an important phase in the global strategy to make the world safer for children.

As the report of the Secretary-General dated 9 February 2005 has highlighted, one of the greatest scourges afflicting children today is the practice of their being recruited and used as child combatants in many conflicts around the world. We observe that children are often brainwashed, sexually harassed and provided with guns to kill at will, affecting their own lives and those of others. It is the duty of the Council and of States Members of the United Nations to ensure

that the parties identified in the report of the Secretary-General are pursued vigorously in order to bring such abuses to an end.

The report of the Secretary-General has identified several non-State actors, some of which have been banned in a number of countries as terrorist groups, as responsible for grave violations and abuses against children. These non-State actors operate beyond the pale of international law, ethics and universally accepted norms of conduct. The Security Council and its Working Group must consider a series of punitive measures against such non-State actors that can increase incrementally when they refuse to fall in line with international norms and practices. It is essential that the Security Council Working Group and the Office of the Special Representative for children and armed conflict show innovativeness and act with firmness to ensure that punitive measures are taken against those non-State actors that are parties to such crimes against children.

We fully recognize and acknowledge the undiminished responsibility of States to protect children at all times, in time of peace and in time of conflict. Unlike non-State actors, however, States are subject to international treaty regimes, which include the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its Protocols and core human rights covenants. All these together constitute a comprehensive international mechanism which ensures that States protect children and promote their well-being. The human rights records of States come under strict scrutiny at periodic reviews held by treaty bodies to monitor the implementation of obligations undertaken by States at the national and international levels.

It is therefore necessary that the Security Council Working Group place its primary focus on non-State actors that are neither bound by, nor have any respect for, international treaty obligations. This will help ensure that States are not burdened with multiple reporting responsibilities and that non-State actors are brought under a punitive regime.

In September 2005, world leaders adopted what constituted their vision and plan of action for the United Nations — the outcome document — which also identified the use of children in armed conflict as a growing menace.

It is important that we reflect on this call by our leaders as we commemorate the first anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005). The international community must now take the next logical step — the most important one — of addressing the priority of normalizing the lives of children affected by armed conflict. As we embark on our task of addressing the plight of children in armed conflict and promoting rights of children, we need to agree that a necessary corollary of that effort will be to provide them assistance, including through meeting their education, health, and recovery needs. This will involve the greater challenge of finding adequate resources through enhanced international cooperation.

As I conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to inform the Council that, in pursuance of resolution 1612 (2005), the Government of Sri Lanka is in the final stages of establishing a task force for monitoring and reporting. In setting up this task force, we took into consideration the report of the Secretary-General dated 9 February 2005, in particular annex II of the report, and the terms of reference of the Security Council Working Group on children and armed conflict.

Detestable crimes have been committed against young children, particularly against Tamil children living in the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka, by a rebel group, the Tamil Tigers, for more than two decades. It is no secret that the situation has scarcely seen any improvement, as has been well documented by none other than UNICEF, which has taken the lead role in bringing this sad state of affairs to public attention. Those children have been forcibly conscripted for battle. Some of them have been programmed into becoming suicide bombers. We in Sri Lanka, therefore, are well aware of the damage caused to the social fabric of a country and its future by this abominable practice on the part of a terrorist group. As an affected country, we urge the international community to take swift and decisive action, without further delay, to end the impunity enjoyed by non-State actors, which continue to abuse children. Let us not, in this endeavour, miss the forest for the trees, and let us not divert responsibility. Let us not fail in our quest to ensure a safe and secure world for our children.

The President (*spoke in French*): After consultations among members of the Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

> "The Security Council reiterates its commitment to address the widespread impact of armed conflict on children and its determination to ensure respect for and implementation of its resolution 1612 (2005) and all its previous

resolutions on children and armed conflict, which provide a comprehensive framework for addressing the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

"As part of this comprehensive framework, the Security Council welcomes the progress made since the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), in particular in the three following areas.

"First, the Security Council welcomes the appointment of a new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict (SRSG), Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy. The Security Council also welcomes her field activities in situations of armed conflict and her intention to carry out new visits in such situations. The Security Council urges parties to armed conflict to cooperate with the SRSG, as well as with UNICEF and other relevant United Nations entities, with a view to ending recruitment and use of child soldiers in violation of applicable international law and all other violations and abuses committed against children by parties to armed conflict.

"Secondly, the Security Council welcomes the ongoing implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict, invites the Secretary-General to accelerate it in accordance with resolution 1612 (2005), and looks forward to receiving the forthcoming independent review on the implementation of this mechanism. The Security Council acknowledges that the application of the mechanism has already produced results in the field and welcomes the efforts by national Governments, relevant United Nations actors and civil society partners to make the mechanism operational. The Security Council therefore invites relevant States affected by armed conflict that are not yet involved in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism to join it on a voluntary basis, in cooperation with the SRSG and UNICEF.

"Thirdly, the Security Council welcomes the activities of its Working Group on children and armed conflict, as outlined in the report by its Chair (S/2006/497). The Security Council welcomes the fact that the Working Group has achieved commendable progress in its implementation phase and is now discussing specific reports of the Secretary-General on parties in situations of armed conflict. The Security Council invites the Working Group to propose effective recommendations for consideration by the Council.

"The Security Council underlines the importance of a sustained investment in development, especially in health, education and skills training, to secure the successful reintegration of children in their communities and prevent re-recruitment. The specific situation of girls exploited by armed forces and groups must be recognized and adequately addressed.

"The Security Council calls for a reinvigorated effort by the international community to enhance the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

In this regard, it invites all parties concerned, including Member States, regional organizations, relevant United Nations entities acting within their mandates including UNICEF, UNDP, UNHCR, OHCHR, ILO and UNESCO, international financial institutions, including the World Bank, as well as civil society, to build partnerships to that effect. In particular, the Security Council invites donors to provide additional resources to fund the development of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the reintegration of children. The Security Council also looks forward to the contribution of the newly established Peacebuilding Commission and Human Rights Council to this effort.

"The Security Council looks forward to the next report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005) and its previous resolutions on children affected by armed conflict, to be submitted by November 2006, and expresses its determination to address this important issue."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2006/PRST/33.

There are a number of speakers remaining on my list who have not yet made their statements. I propose, with the consent of the members of the Council, to suspend this meeting until 2.30 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.10 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5494 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5494th meeting
Monday, 24 July 2006, 2.30 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Duclos	(France)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Loguzzo
	China	Mr. Cheng Lie
	Congo	Mr. Biaboroh-Iboro
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	Ghana	Mr. Christian
	Greece	Mrs. Telalian
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Peru	Ms. Tincopa
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Thani
	Russian Federation	Mr. Rogachev
	Slovakia	Mr. Grexa
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Shultz
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mrs. Taj
	United States of America	Mr. Donovan

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Letter dated 6 July 2006 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2006/494)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-44100 (E)

The meeting resumed at 2.40 p.m.

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have just received letters from the representatives of Benin and Israel, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of Benin and Israel took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): I wish to remind all speakers, as I indicated at this morning's meeting, to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I now give the floor to the representative of Uganda.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda): First of all, I take this opportunity to congratulate the French Republic for assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of July and wish the delegation the best in their tenure. I wish to thank the President for organizing this very important meeting and, through him, other members of the Council.

Before proceeding, I am compelled at this juncture to refer to Canada's statement this morning, to the effect that the situation in northern Uganda should be put on the agenda of the Security Council. For reasons best known to themselves, Canada has led a relentless and aggressive campaign to put Uganda on the Council's agenda, as if to do so would produce some magic wonder. What is even more amazing is the fact that Canada has accepted to be part of the joint monitoring committee mechanism that is addressing the alleged concerns of Canada — that is, improving the humanitarian situation in northern Uganda and promoting a lasting solution to the conflict. As I speak, Uganda is engaged in peace talks with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Juba. As a result, we strongly object to this persistent and uncalled-for campaign by Canada.

On a positive note, Uganda joins the rest of the speakers in welcoming the appointment of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy. This came at a time when the international community craved someone to breathe fresh air into that Office. For Uganda, her appointment has even more importance and significance, not only because of the conflict that has dragged on with the Lord's Resistance Army, but also because it marks a new beginning of much-needed cooperation between the Ugandan Government and the Office of the Special Representative. She will have all the support and cooperation from my Government, and I wish her the best in her new assignment.

The need to protect and promote the rights of children in armed conflict cannot be overemphasized. Often children constitute the majority of innocent victims of armed conflicts, wherever they may occur. They are the most vulnerable to indiscriminate killing; they get maimed, raped or defiled, and they are recruited as combatants. Still others get displaced and suffer terrible consequences.

The war instigated by the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda over the last 19 years has been a source of concern with regard to the topic under discussion today and to the international community. Over the years, its method of work was characterized by the abduction of children for use in its rebel ranks, summary killings and various forms of sexual and gender-based violence, such as rape and defilement. This morning the representative of the United States referred to those gruesome acts carried out by the LRA.

I am glad to point out that during the last couple of years, particularly since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement, marked progress has been achieved. For now, the threat posed by the LRA in northern Uganda has been drastically reduced, and the Government is now closely collaborating with the international community to devise a mechanism that will deal a decisive blow to it. It is hoped that the Joint Monitoring Committee launched by His Excellency

President Yoweri Museveni on 4 May 2006 to deal with humanitarian and security concerns, among other things, will go a long way towards addressing most of the problems, such as that of children and armed conflict.

The Government has already increased security in the area to avoid abductions and killings and is in the process of establishing a special unit to deal with the remnants of the LRA. While these initiatives are going on, the Government has embraced peace talks with the LRA under the auspices of the Government of southern Sudan in Juba; these talks started last week. It is our hope that the talks will come to fruition, culminating in the demobilization of the LRA combatants and their reintegration into society. The Government takes cognizance of the fact that the majority of these fighters were abducted children, whose reintegration into society is of paramount importance.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict visited Uganda recently, as was mentioned this morning. During her visit, a four-principle understanding on the way forward on the question of recruitment and use of children in armed conflict was reached, as a basis for strengthening the existing legal and policy frameworks.

The Government of Uganda and UNICEF will agree on an action plan to sensitize various stakeholders about the national laws, international conventions and protocols against the recruitment and use of children; to monitor implementation of the various national laws, international conventions and protocols against the recruitment and use of children in armed forces; and to remove children, if and when found in the armed forces.

While the Special Representative of the Secretary-General acknowledges the existing legal framework and the fact that the Government of Uganda has no policy to recruit and use children, my Government reiterates its commitment to the appropriate disciplinary action against those military officers and officials who knowingly recruit and use children.

With the above understanding, together with the Joint Monitoring Committee, the institutional and legal framework for addressing the most challenging aspects of dealing with the question of children and armed conflict is in place.

Lastly, in November of 2001, Uganda ratified two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. One of them was on the prohibition of the conscription of children into the army and the use of child soldiers below 18 years. This is also reflected in our Constitution, Articles 25 and 34, as well as the Children's Act of 1996.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of San Marino.

Mr. Bodini (San Marino): One year ago, Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) was adopted, providing the mandate for the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism on children in armed conflict. Unfortunately, since then more children around the world have been mentally, physically and sexually abused or even maimed. More have become killer children, or children killed. Those numbers are growing at a catastrophic pace.

San Marino has decided to take the floor on this issue because it believes it is one of the most important issues at stake. Every time that a child is abused or killed, not only does a human life end, but also his or her dreams and his or her contribution to his or her family and society as well. When a child is forced to become a killer for whatever reason — whether religious, political, or ethnic — an even greater crime is committed. That child, who is, in fact, the prey of hatred and violence, will destroy not only his own future, but the growth of our collective well-being.

We have to stop the diabolic and vicious cycle that obliterates the lives of our children. We have to forge moral values and provide hope and future aspirations for a decent life, so that we do not allow the armed conflicts to continue — or to develop in the first place.

We applaud the establishment of the Security Council Working Group chaired by France, and we commend Ambassador de La Sablière for his excellent work. However, we believe that more can be done. We believe the Security Council, the Governments of the affected States, the relevant United Nations agencies and the non-governmental organizations must improve their working methods and more forcefully prevent such abuses. They must bring to justice the criminals who take advantage of those youths.

Article 24, paragraph 1, of the United Nations Charter states that

> "Members confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf."

As a Member, I cannot think of a more compelling duty for the Council than to stop armed conflict carried out by child warriors. San Marino, along with, I am sure, the vast majority of Member States, asks the Council to implement effectively and without delay resolution 1612 (2005). What, in fact, is more important for the Security Council than to protect the right of so many children to enjoy happy and fruitful lives?

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Mr. Kirn (Slovenia): In the interest of time, I will deliver a shortened version of my statement; the full text will be distributed.

It is my honour to speak on behalf of the Human Security Network, namely Austria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Thailand and Slovenia, and South Africa as an observer.

Let me begin by thanking the presidency of the Security Council this month for organizing this important and timely open debate. I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for her briefing this morning, and for the submission of the first report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2006/389). I also thank Ms. Ann Veneman, the Executive Director of UNICEF, for UNICEF's engagement in providing special protection for children who are affected by armed conflicts.

The Human Security Network supports the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, as defined in resolution 1612 (2005), with its specific focus on children in disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation processes. We also encourage follow-up reporting, particularly on demobilized children.

The creation of the Security Council Working Group reflects the international community's commitment to address the issue at the highest level. We fully support the Working Group's efforts to address country-specific cases and to respond with concrete recommendations for action. That includes applying targeted and graduated measures and mandating peacekeeping missions, as appropriate. We acknowledge and appreciate the commitment of the Working Group to examine information on progress made in ending the recruitment and deployment of children in armed conflicts, and other violations against them, and appeal for a maximum of transparency in their work.

The Security Council's role in addressing the plight of children affected by armed conflict is an integral part of its peace and security responsibilities. In that regard, the Network further encourages the Council to take up the issue when considering resolutions on specific conflict situations or when planning Security Council field missions. A positive development over recent years is the deployment, on a case-by-case basis, of child protection advisers into certain United Nations peacekeeping operations. These United Nations country teams should be working with national and local authorities to develop time-bound action plans as mandated in resolution 1612 (2005). The action plans will allow the Working Group to review progress in specific conflicts and to use them as a basis to recommend further action.

Atrocities committed against children in armed conflict pose a profound challenge to international law. Massive and gross violations of the rights and dignity of the child continue unabated. Impunity for war crimes and crimes against humanity, specifically against children, must end. Effective prosecution of perpetrators must be ensured by taking measures at the national level and by enhancing international cooperation. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court recognized that conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 years into armed forces or armed non-State groups, using them to participate actively in hostilities, as well as sexual violence as a method of warfare, are crimes against humanity and war crimes. The Network reiterates the importance of the International Criminal Court in prosecuting such crimes and bringing an end to impunity.

Respect for relevant international and regional norms and standards on human rights and humanitarian law is a prerequisite for the effective protection of children affected by armed conflict. We urge all States

that have not yet done so to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the International Labour Organization Convention on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and other relevant international legal instruments, and to further confirm their commitment by effectively implementing those instruments.

We attach great importance to the active involvement and the contribution of regional and subregional organizations in preventing and suppressing violations and abuses committed against children in situations of armed conflict. We fully support all endeavours of the Office of the Special Representative, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, other entities of the United Nations system and other relevant international and non-governmental organizations in this field. It is also important to strengthen the local structures on the ground and to develop local and national mechanisms for early responses to abuses that can feed into the international response.

Let me conclude by saying that the Human Security Network fully supports the recent focus of the Security Council on implementation of past resolutions and tangible responses, with a view to achieving the goal of ending serious violations and abuses of children's rights in armed conflicts. Furthermore, we encourage ongoing dialogue and cooperation at the local and national levels, with the aim of reducing and eliminating the plight of children in armed conflicts.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Anzola (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Venezuela welcomes the initiative of France to convene this open debate on the question of children and armed conflict, which is an issue of concern to the international community.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela regards the work that the Council could do in this area as complementary to the primary role of the General Assembly in the overall handling of the situation of children in the world and to the mechanisms established pursuant to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela recognizes the work done by the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the issue now before us. At the same time, we commend the work done by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. As regards the working group established by the Security Council, we believe that it is important that it carry out its work in close consultation and cooperation with States, given the primary responsibility that States bear in advancing and defending the rights of children. Moreover, it is vital in negotiations and peace agreements among parties involved in situations of armed conflict that the problem of child soldiers is taken into account and given priority in programmes of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration after the conflict.

Our country is a party to the international Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 38 of that Convention enshrines the protection of children during and after situations of armed conflict and establishes a ban on recruitment by all States parties of those under 15 into their armed forces. Venezuela ratified this Convention on 7 September 2000. The Venezuelan State is also a party to the Optional Protocol of the Convention on the Rights of the Child concerning the involvement of children in armed conflict, ratified on 23 September 2003.

We would like to take this opportunity to voice some concerns with respect to that Optional Protocol. The Protocol stipulates that States parties shall ensure that on their territories there shall be no forceable recruitment of minors under 18, furthermore establishing that States parties that allow voluntary recruitment into their armed forces of those under 18 should take steps to safeguard them and to ensure that recruitment does not occur by force or coercion, and that also they will take all necessary measures to ensure that no member of their armed forces under 18 directly participates in hostilities.

There is some ambiguity in some provisions of that legal instrument, which is also plain in article 4, paragraphs 1 and 2, which indicate that armed groups that are distinct from the armed forces of a State should not in any circumstance recruit or use in hostilities those under 18, and that States parties should take all feasible measures to prevent such recruitment and use, including the adoption of the necessary legal measures to prohibit and criminalize such practices.

That may seem contradictory, given that it prohibits recruitment of minors to armed groups distinct from the armed forces of a State, whereas States are allowed to recruit those under 18. Moreover, it is difficult to ensure that irregular armed groups respect the legal measures that have been established against recruiting those under 18 when those groups are contravening all legal norms.

On this point, moreover, our country has concerns about the laws whereby those minors might be brought to trial should they decide to desert when they are in active service in the armed forces with the consent of the parents or those who have legal guardianship over them. What law applies to them? Are the provisions of the Convention and its Optional Protocol applicable to them? That aspect is not dealt with in the Convention or in the Optional Protocol and has not been considered adequately in order to cover situations falling within a legal vacuum, which have been arising recently.

In Venezuela, the Conscription and Military Enlistment Law sets the minimum age for enlistment in the armed forces and participation in armed conflicts at 18. Moreover, in drawing up its Act on the Protection of Children and Adolescents, promulgated in 2000, Venezuela prepared its National Strategic Plan for the Protection of Children and Adolescents, which, among other things, covers the right of survival, and within that the right to protection in the cases of armed conflict.

The National Council for the Protection of Children and Adolescents is the Venezuelan agency that can support the activities of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. It can also establish a collaborative relationship that might provide guidance to the Security Council Working Group and link its work to development-related issues, in particular health and education, in order to give children better prospects of rehabilitation, physical and psychological recovery and reintegration into society.

We would like to stress that the quest for proper solutions to the problem of children and armed conflict necessary involves tackling the causes that contribute to the rise of this phenomenon in various regions of the world. This approach involves applying strategies designed to overcome poverty and hunger as essential prerequisites for ensuring the full realization of the human rights of children. We cannot hide the fact that, given the tragic situation of poverty and exclusion that many children face, they are the first affected when confronting an extremely delicate situation, exposed to all kinds of risks that endanger their integral development.

It is also important to recall that General Assembly resolution S-27/2, adopted in 2002 at the Assembly's twenty-seventh special session, on children, stresses in section III, the Plan of Action, that chronic poverty remains the single biggest obstacle to meeting the needs and protecting and promoting the rights of children. This concern has been tackled by the Government of President Hugo Chávez Frías as a fundamental element in social programmes promoted by the State.

Our country rejects any use of children in armed conflicts, as well as other abuses and violations committed against children in situations of armed conflict. Venezuela deplores the impunity that still prevails in many areas affected by armed conflict where the parties involved continue to contravene the relevant provisions of applicable international law concerning the rights and protection of children in such situations. Venezuela resolutely supports the adoption of effective measures to ensure demobilization of child soldiers and their rehabilitation, physical and psychological recovery and reintegration into society.

Lastly, Venezuela cannot fail to express its deep concern for the situation of boys and girls in Lebanese territory and in the occupied Palestinian territories, given the tragic events that threaten their physical integrity. We call on all the States and international agencies to fulfil their obligation to protect the lives of those who are unjustly swept up in this outbreak of violence in the Middle East.

In recent events in the Middle East, we have seen photos of children being used to support activities of destruction and war. That is no more than a reflection of how the warlords use even the innocence of children who are swept up in traumatic situations around the world.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala.

Mr. Skinner-Klée (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): To evaluate the situation of children in armed conflict around the world is to assess the future that we are building. The UNICEF report *The State of the*

World's Children 2000 contains a map entitled "Unstable Environments", which indicates that the legacy of the decade of 1990s was more than two million dead children, more than six million seriously injured or permanently maimed, more than a million orphans or children separated from their families, unknown numbers of children psychologically traumatized and more than 15 million children who are refugees or are internally displaced. All of that constitutes an extremely serious reality that needs to be tackled. For this reason, our commitment to the first decade of this millennium is to leave a totally different legacy.

Because we have suffered more than three decades of armed conflict, Guatemala understands very well the importance of protecting and helping children and of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children in their original communities. We also highlight the importance of establishing monitoring, reporting and verification mechanisms such as, in our case, the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA). We can say the same of the vital need for securing timely, objective, precise and reliable information to combat the recruitment and use of child soldiers, as well as the need to halt the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and to strengthen States in order to put an end to such crimes.

Guatemala was visited by the first Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Olara A. Otunnu, in February 2002. He held interviews with various officials of the Government, of civil society, representatives of indigenous peoples and the agencies and funds of the United Nations. He also visited the most devastated conflict areas in the country, which enabled him to draw up a set of recommendations that helped in the adoption of measures in favour of children and helped also to give priority to the issue of the protection of children in the Government's policies, particularly in the areas of education and health.

That experience prompts us to support the continued function of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and therefore we welcome the new Representative, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, whom we thank for her timely briefing this morning. We urge her to continue to visit countries in conflict or emerging from conflict, because we are convinced of the benefits of such a mechanism when it involves the broad-based participation of civil society.

We welcome also the first report of the Secretary-General on a specific situation of armed conflict, which is focused on violations of the rights of the child in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Indeed, Guatemala is a participant in the United Nations peacekeeping mission in that country.

While it is true that the primary responsibility for the maintenance of national peace and security lies with States, it is also a fact that the work of the Security Council, which is closely bound up with armed conflicts and with peacekeeping operations, obliges it also to tackle issues such as the recruitment and abuse of children in armed conflicts.

My delegation concurs with and supports all the resolutions adopted by the Council that are designed to help establish a general framework for the protection of children affected by armed conflict. We would like in particular to draw attention to resolution 1612 (2005), which affirms the primary responsibility of States to put an end to impunity and to bring to justice those responsible for crimes against humanity and war crimes, particularly abuses committed against children in conflict situations. It reiterates also the Council's resolve to ensure respect for its resolutions, norms and principles for the protection of children in armed conflict, and also establishes the Council's Working Group on this issue.

For that reason, we commend the French presidency for its report on the work of the Working Group, and we endorse the presidential statement that was issued this morning, which, without a doubt, reflects the magnitude of the problem and the imperative need to put an end to the recruitment of children in armed forces by groups and individuals. It is essential to ensure the reintegration of such children in their original communities, the lasting rehabilitation of demobilized children, and the strengthening of military and civilian justice systems so that States can put an end to impunity for those who have disregarded the resolutions and condemnations issued by the Council concerning such reprehensible practices.

We support the Secretary-General's policy of zero tolerance and welcome the fact that we are in the "era of application", as set out in resolution 1460 (2003), aimed at putting an end to impunity. We regret the delays that have taken place and the fact that the

independent review will probably not be concluded by the end of this month, since those responsible for it have not yet been appointed. However, we do not believe that this review should be postponed until the end of the year; on the contrary, we urge that it be done as soon as possible.

We believe that the appointment of advisers for the protection of minors in peacekeeping operations is an excellent idea. We thanks Ms. Ann Veneman for her report this morning, and we congratulate UNICEF in particular for its work in the field, because their broad global coverage of all issues relating to children gives them a very clear picture of the problems experienced by children in armed conflict. Above all, we urge them to continue to work in close cooperation with States' Governments.

I wish to thank you once again, Mr. President, for this opportunity to express my country's views on this very important issue.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker on my list is the Permanent Observer of Palestine, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): Palestine welcomes this open Security Council ministerial debate on children and armed conflict, and we extend our deep appreciation to the French presidency for having convened such a timely debate. We firmly share the belief that the protection of children in armed conflict is a matter of immense importance. The interest shown by the Council is both appropriate and necessary, and we hope that it will continue to give it priority attention until sufficient and serious protection of children in armed conflict is granted in all cases, without selectivity or inaction based on political considerations.

Before continuing, Palestine would also like to take this opportunity to welcome Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. We congratulate her and wish her success in her task of furthering the cause of protecting children affected by armed conflicts. We are hopeful that her efforts will greatly contribute to ensuring that the plight of children exposed to violations and abuses during armed conflicts will be more vigorously addressed by the international community. In this connection, we would like to thank her for her recent statement, issued on 20 July 2006, calling for the protection of children in the Middle East. We would also like to thank Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, for her attendance and for her participation in this debate. We thank them both for their thought-provoking statements and hope that their ideas and proposals are given careful consideration. We also welcome the presence and participation of the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

For more than 39 years, Israel, the occupying Power, has been committing serious violations and grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention in its policies and practices against the Palestinian people, including Palestinian children. It continues to flagrantly and systematically violate their human rights, in violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Israeli occupation has permeated every level of their lives, affecting even their most basic rights and gravely impairing and endangering their lives and their very future.

I regret to state that it is very difficult for the Security Council to assert credibility, or claim success, in dealing with the issue of the protection of children in armed conflict when it has repeatedly failed to effectively respond to the protection needs of Palestinian children and other children in our region. Here I refer to the increased need for urgent action in that area during the past several years, and most recently, over the past several weeks, during the latest Israeli aggression against the besieged Gaza Strip and its captive civilian population, including children, many of whom have been killed, injured, maimed, left homeless, left motherless and fatherless, terrorized and traumatized by the occupying forces. The death toll among the Palestinian people — devoid of protection by the international community — has, just in the past few weeks, surpassed 100 people, at least 16 of them children. Even more tragic is the fact that, since September 2000, the number of Palestinian civilians killed by the Israeli occupying forces now totals more than 4,000 Palestinians, including over 800 children.

These staggering figures do not include the thousands of innocent and defenceless children seriously injured by the Israeli occupying forces. Sadly, the lives of Palestinian children under Israeli occupation are under constant threat, for there is no refuge or safe haven, when even their homes,

classrooms, playgrounds and hospitals are not safe from the excessive and indiscriminate assaults carried out by the occupying Power.

In that connection, we continue to call on the international community, especially the Security Council, to fulfil its obligations and to take the necessary measures to ensure the protection of the Palestinian civilian population, including in particular children, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and not to leave them any longer at the mercy of the brute force and illegal policies and practices of the occupying Power.

Another important issue that must be brought to the attention of the Council is the fact that the deaths of Palestinian children at the hands of Israeli occupying forces are usually given only a cursory investigation, if any. Indictments of members of the Israeli occupying forces for the killing or injury of civilians are rare, and convictions are almost unheard of. That has fostered a culture of impunity among the occupying forces and heightened their perception that they are immune from the law and will not be held accountable for their illegal actions. It is scarcely surprising, then, that Israeli occupying forces act with an air of moral immunity, often shooting excessively, unnecessarily and indiscriminately.

One stark example of the occupying Power's indifference to the right of Palestinian children to life is an Israeli military court's decision of 15 November 2005 to clear an Israeli occupying force commander of a range of charges, including illegally using his weapon after he fired a stream of bullets into the body of an already-injured 13-year old Palestinian schoolgirl in Rafah. At the time of the incident, in October 2004, transcripts of the occupying Power's radio communication exchange revealed that occupying forces in the watchtower had quickly identified Iman Al-Hems — who was dressed in a school uniform issued by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East — as "a girl of about 10 [who was] scared to death". As Iman was running away from the army post, she was shot in the leg and fell to the ground. At that point, the occupying force commander moved in and, standing over the helpless Iman, shot her twice in the head, walked away, turned back and fired a stream of bullets into her body, "confirming the kill", as he termed it.

Indeed, such horrifying actions are a blatant violation of the right to life — the fundamental right of any human being and a right which States parties must expressly recognize under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. But it is not just the right to life that Israel deliberately denies Palestinian children. The policies and practices of the occupying Power violate a countless number of the rights set out in the Convention and other binding international legal instruments, including the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949. Accordingly, it is imperative that measures ultimately be taken to hold the perpetrators of such crimes accountable and to bring them to justice, for without such measures the culture of impunity that we are now witnessing will only grow, with even more disastrous consequences.

I would like to acknowledge that the concept paper regarding this debate suggested that we remain focused on the subject matter and make suggestions. In our opinion, the issue is clear and can be summarized in one word: compliance. That includes compliance with relevant instruments of international humanitarian law and human rights law and compliance with the Security Council's own resolutions. That will ultimately provide the most comprehensive protection for children in armed conflict. We add to that, once again, the need to avoid selectivity, be it with regard to enforcing compliance or in dealing with the matter as a whole.

In conclusion, we believe that the establishment of the reporting and monitoring mechanism, as well as the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, as outlined in resolution 1612 (2005), is a good start in providing the foundation for addressing the issue before us. We invite Ms. Coomaraswamy to visit the occupied Palestinian territory, as we have requested in the past of former Special Representative Olara Otunnu, to examine the absence of protection for Palestinian children under Israeli occupation and to make concrete suggestions on ways to ensure the protection they so desperately need, as is accorded to them under international law. The Security Council Group should also play a leading role in that regard. Serious and urgent efforts must be undertaken to put an end to the dire situation facing Palestinian children. They, like all children of the world, deserve to live in a world in which they can grow, play and learn in freedom, peace and security.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Tarragô (Brazil) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, first of all, to thank the French presidency of the Council for having convened this meeting on such an important subject.

(*spoke in English*)

I also wish to congratulate Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy on her appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. Let me also thank her and Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, for their respective statements. I am also grateful to the Secretary-General for submitting his report on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We hope that the recommendations of the report will be fully implemented so that the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in that country can be stopped once and for all.

The problem of children and armed conflict continues to draw attention at a very high level. An effective response to that issue is essential. We are confronted by alarming figures. Nearly 90 per cent of the casualties in armed conflicts are civilians, mainly women and children. In the past decade, an estimated 20 million children worldwide were forced to leave their homes because of conflict. More than 2 million children have died as a direct result of armed clashes. Three hundred thousand children have been used as soldiers in more than 30 countries. The United Nations has a key role to play in changing that sad reality.

In the Middle East, the fate of children has been no less distressing. Even Brazilian children have not been spared the bombardments of Israel on Lebanon. Three of those children living in the country died last week. Such indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population, from all parties, must stop immediately.

The position paper circulated by the presidency of the Security Council on 6 July mentions that important new developments have occurred since the last debate on this matter. Those developments show that we have finished the phase of completing the legal framework required to deal with the issue. We have consolidated the main guidelines in various instruments, such as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the International Labour Organization's Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Having entered the era of application, as the Secretary-General indicated in his 2005 report, we are now in the process of designing mechanisms to fully implement the legal framework I have just mentioned. The adoption of resolution 1612 (2005) is the most visible development in that new phase. It establishes a set of concrete measures and the institutional basis for the Security Council to carry out its mandate.

The issue of children and armed conflict constitutes a problem of a complex nature. It requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses social, economic, security and human rights perspectives. Brazil is of the view that an adequate and effective response to this multifaceted problem must comprise coordination of all its elements. It is therefore important to have the involvement of other relevant bodies of the United Nations system.

We expect that the Security Council, based on its Working Group established under resolution 1612 (2005), will work in close coordination with the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. That joint effort is required to address all the aspects of the issue, including the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers. There should also be coordination with UNICEF, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Development Programme.

Likewise, we should profit from the contributions that civil society, especially non-governmental organizations, can make to coordination efforts. Such broad and comprehensive coordination is essential to maximize the effect of the Council's actions in stopping the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict.

I should not let pass this opportunity to highlight the importance of the independent review of the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism. At this point, it is not realistic to expect that the evaluation will be completed by 31 July, but it is important that the conclusions of the independent review indicate how effectively the mechanism can link the work of the Security Council to that of other

organs of the United Nations, as well as shed light on the division of responsibilities.

In closing, I wish to reiterate that Brazil is fully committed to the cause of promoting and protecting the rights of the child in general and is determined to support effective measures designed to protect children affected by armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Myanmar.

Mr. Swe (Myanmar): I wish to thank you, Sir, for convening this open debate on the important issue of children and armed conflict.

Since the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), a number of important steps have been taken, including the appointment of a new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy. I should like to thank her and others for the introductory statements they made this morning.

We have also witnessed the ongoing implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism set up to collect and provide timely, objective, accurate and reliable information on the recruitment and use of child soldiers, in violation of applicable international law. We are gratified that resolution 1612 (2005) underlines that the mechanism must operate, inter alia, with the participation and cooperation of national Governments. We take special satisfaction that the resolution also stresses that all actions undertaken by United Nations entities within the framework of the monitoring and reporting mechanism must be designed to support and supplement the protection and rehabilitation roles of national Governments.

My delegation, in previous debates on this issue, has stressed the importance of objective, accurate and verified information with regard to reports that come before the Security Council. We have also stressed that the issue of the protection of children — an issue to which all of us attach special importance — must not be politicized. I have also refuted the unfounded allegations regarding my country from sources originating from exiles and remnant insurgent groups. Those falsehoods were mentioned this morning in the statement made by a member of the Council.

Let me put on record once again that the Myanmar armed forces are an all-volunteer army and that those entering military service do so of their own free will. Under the Myanmar Defence Services Act and the War Office Council instruction of 1974, the minimum age for recruitment into the armed forces is 18 years.

The reports of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Myanmar have underscored the fact that the insurgent groups in Myanmar extensively practice the recruitment and use of child soldiers. I wish to stress that the Government is taking measures to prevent children from being recruited into the insurgent groups.

With regard to its own recruitment, the Government has taken effective measures to ensure that, even when volunteering, no underage children are recruited into the Myanmar armed forces. To that end, an entity on the prevention of military recruitment of underage children, a high-level inter-ministerial committee headed by the First Secretary of the State Peace and Development Council, was established. Stringent monitoring and inspection are made both at the recruitment stage and again at the training stage. Applicants who fail to meet the minimum age requirement are turned away at the recruitment stage. Additionally, those few that have slipped through the scrutiny and who are found to be under 18 at the training stage are discharged from the military.

The Government, of its own volition, has also drawn up an action plan that includes the protection of children's rights, prevention measures, the promotion of public awareness and coordination with UNICEF. The Government has also arranged visits of the United Nations Development Programme Resident Coordinator and a UNICEF representative to the two main military recruitment centres in Yangon and Mandalay and has enabled them to interact freely with the recruits. The action plan includes provisions for the discharge of children under 18 from military service and their reintegration into families and communities. We have been cooperating with both the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and with UNICEF with regard to the issue and, in December 2005, we again provided the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Executive Director of UNICEF with a list of newly recruited soldiers who were discharged from military service during that calendar year.

For over 40 years since regaining its independence in 1948, Myanmar suffered the scourge

of insurgency. However, today, as a result of the national reconciliation efforts of the Government, out of 18 major insurgent groups, 17 have come back to the legal fold and are working together with the Government for the development of their respective regions. As a result, we have been able to restore peace and stability to almost all corners of Myanmar. The Government has also extended an olive branch to the remaining groups and will continue to do so. We strongly believe that the best way to protect children in armed conflict lies in conflict prevention and resolution.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of Liberia.

Mr. Minor (Liberia): I bring you greetings, Sir, from our President, Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who was originally invited to be here. Unfortunately, pressing matters of state prevented her from coming, and she has asked me to sit in her stead. As you know, the day after tomorrow we will be celebrating the 159th anniversary of our independence, and our people require the President to be there.

This Council is at the apex of the international community's search for peace and security. Today, as we endeavour to seek peace in one corner of our world, rupture is occurring in another. President Sirleaf and the Liberian people are disturbed by the events in the Middle East and wish to register support for the exercise of restraint on both sides of the divide. In pursuing a resolution to the crisis, we believe efforts must be made to remove or eliminate threats to sovereign States in the region and that the reduction of hostilities and the pursuance of peace should be within the context of the United Nations and this Council.

It is commendable that, in spite of the crises in the Middle East and other burning issues around the world, the Council has found it expedient to schedule a debate on children in armed conflicts. That subject is important to Liberia and to our entire region.

Children constitute almost one half of our entire population and they unjustly suffered during the continuous war we experienced in our country. It is well established that far too many of them were victims of brutal killing, rape, sexual assault, abduction, torture, forced labour, or forced recruitment as fighters in combat. Twenty-one thousand of them are known to have been child soldiers, participating in murder, mayhem, rape and the destruction of property.

Our war has ended, but our country is now involved in the humongous tasks of reconstruction, rehabilitation, reconciliation and renewal. In meeting those challenges, our children are foremost in our minds, our plans and our actions. The Government's education programme, one of the most challenging, is aimed at increasing the percentage of children in school, especially girls; improving the quality and practicality of the skills they acquire; and enhancing the level of literacy and numeracy in the country.

We abhor the violation of the security and rights of our children and vouch to exert every effort in their rehabilitation and support of their security. Having ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Government is now proposing to the national legislature the ratification of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

As we address the issues affecting children in Liberia, we continue to be disturbed by conflicts in other parts of our subregion. The reported recruitment of Liberian children to cross the border and fight as mercenaries in other countries is most disquieting. While we certainly are doing and will continue to do all we can within our means to curtail that problem, we appeal for United Nations intervention not just in condemning the practice but to bring to justice all persons who flagrantly violate the rights of children by maliciously and illegally recruiting them to kill or be killed and thus destroy and violate the rights of innocent people.

The Liberian Government is aware that although we have been assisted in disarming and demobilizing our combatant children, the transitional safety net provided to them is inadequate. They must be returned to their families and schools and be assisted in developing the requisite skills to be fully rehabilitated and to participate in civil life, gainfully. Continuous support from the Council and from all of our friends in the international community would help greatly in the process.

Liberia remains grateful to the Security Council for its role in helping to resolve the Liberian crisis. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has been and continues to be our saving grace. We pray as the Council considers its redeployment that the process will be gradual, thus enabling us to restructure and

train our own security apparatus to ensure that the peace we have won, with the Council's help, is sustained.

The lifting of sanctions on Liberia forest products is an important step in assisting our Government to meet the challenges we face to improve the lives of our children. In that context, we ask for continued support to meet the conditionalities for the lifting of sanctions on our diamonds.

I congratulate the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and commit our full support to the work she does. I also wish to thank UNICEF and all those who have been helpful in our programme to rehabilitate our children. I thank the Secretary-General for his recent visit to Liberia, and I assure the Council of our abiding faith in the Organization and our commitment to its goals and objectives.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to express to the President the appreciation of my delegation for convening this important meeting. In addition we thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his report on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2006/389). My delegation expresses its appreciation to the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for her tireless efforts to promote and protect the rights of children in armed conflict. I also express our appreciation to Ms. Ann Veneman, the Executive Director of UNICEF, as well as the other speakers in the Council today. I take this opportunity to reiterate Egypt's support for all of their efforts and the efforts of the United Nations and its entities to achieve the objectives.

Since 1999 the Security Council has given special attention to the issue of the protection of human rights during armed conflicts, in particular as that issue concerns refugee and internally displaced children and the children killed in armed conflicts. Since then the Council has convened several open debates and adopted six resolutions, the most recent of which is resolution 1612 (2005) of 26 July 2005. That resolution created the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. The Group is considering, inter alia, the situations in the Sudan, Sri Lanka, Côte d'Ivoire and Burundi, after considering the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo last June and submitting its report.

While we reiterate our support for all the Council's efforts to promote ways and means of protecting children in the above-mentioned armed conflicts, as an expression of our African and our international responsibilities, Egypt is astonished at the Council's exclusion of a group of most unfortunate children, those under foreign occupation and in particular the children in the occupied Palestinian territories. Those children are killed every day due to the oppressive and inhuman acts committed by Israel against them. They are punished for the mere expression, with their faint voices and stones, of their refusal of the occupation of their lands, the imprisonment of their families and the blockade and prevention of access to supplies and humanitarian assistance that is leading to the denial to them of all means of a decent life.

Last Friday, Mr. Nambiar, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East. Among other things, he correctly stated that the latest military actions by Israel had resulted in the killing of 147 Palestinians thus far, at least 15 of whom were children killed in their houses and villages as the result of a series of attacks. The most recent such incident was the killing of a large number of children who were spending their summer vacation on the beach of Gaza, by bombarding them from the sea.

There is no doubt that the Security Council's neglect of the suffering of the Palestinian children under occupation has encouraged Israel to widen and expand the scope of its military operations to include the children in Lebanon, within the context of its current ongoing military operations.

Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland stated to the Council last Friday, and reaffirmed during his subsequent visit to Lebanon, the magnitude of the humanitarian tragedy confronting one million Lebanese, due to the disproportionate and arbitrary Israeli military attacks that have resulted in a huge number of children losing their lives or being maimed or disabled. In addition, other Lebanese children are suffering from severe humanitarian crises and tragedies as a result of the military operations and blockade that

have led to the lack of food, water, medicine and other essential needs of life.

I was delighted to see Ms. Coomaraswamy interviewed this morning on an Arab television station, where she reaffirmed her readiness to make all necessary efforts to protect children in Lebanon. I hope that we will soon see practical steps in that regard.

Egypt demands that the Security Council immediately take a decision to broaden the scope of the work of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to include the children in the occupied Palestinian territories and Lebanon. Egypt requests the Council to take the necessary effective measures to guarantee equality between the Arab children in Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, African children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire and Burundi, who are duly protected by the Council and the United Nations from such inhuman acts.

Egypt requests that all measures be taken at the level of both the Security Council and the General Assembly to prevent Israel from attacking children and to ensure that it respects, as an occupying Power, its legal commitments, as well as to guarantee that a comprehensive and just solution to the Middle East crisis is achieved exclusively through the final status negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations as soon as possible. That would provide the necessary protection for Palestinian, Lebanese and Israeli children alike.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Mrs. Holguín (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the President for convening this debate on children affected by armed conflicts. We are aware of the importance that France has attached to this issue and, as a country affected by this cruel problem, we are grateful to it. Moreover, we would like to thank the Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for her work and her statement today, and also Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

We commend the Council on the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005), which has begun to yield its first results. Colombia, as an affected country, reaffirms its willingness to cooperate and welcomes the monitoring mechanism when it falls due for countries in annex II, once the exercise concerning countries on the Council's agenda in annex I is completed, accompanied by the independent review stipulated in the resolution.

Circumstances such as the current conflict in the Middle East, where hundreds of children are affected by armed conflict, indicate the need for an even wider approach to the issue. We trust that the Secretary-General's Special Representative will act accordingly. As a complement to the Council's work, we believe that the work of the Office of the Special Representative at this new stage must go beyond formulations of the problem. We believe that it must, working jointly with States and relevant entities within the United Nations system, focus on preventing such situations and finding lasting and specific solutions to each one. In this regard, we would ask the Council to ensure that, in addition to documenting the situation on the ground, monitoring will present strategies for long-term solutions to address the recruiting of minors by terrorists and illegal armed groups.

In studying this set of problems, what is clear is the need to create national strategies for the development and protection of vulnerable children threatened by the actions of illegal armed groups that operate in various countries and regions of the world, strategies to be designed by countries themselves with the support of the United Nations system.

Though the Security Council has studied the issue and alerted us to the urgent need for solutions, these will be found in the short-, medium- and long-term through support for national programmes — or their establishment when they do not exist — that seek to permanently rescue children recruited by illegal armed groups. Likewise, as stated by many Council members this morning, social and education programmes focusing on vulnerable children must be strengthened and must be a priority.

In this context, Colombia has 2,600 children demobilized from illegal armed groups in the last four years. For rehabilitation, we have counted on the support of UNICEF and the International Organization for Migration. The emotional and physical rehabilitation of children affected by armed conflicts is a priority for us, as are prevention programmes. Both tracks lead to the strengthening of education and employment systems that promote an atmosphere of

opportunity for children, both to prevent their recruitment and to foster their social and economic integration into the communities and societies to which they belong.

In this task, we believe the United Nations Development Programme and UNICEF have a key role to play and must consolidate their country programmes and proposals to find lasting and sustainable solutions that will guarantee and protect a harmonious and productive life for these children. In this respect, it is important to study UNICEF's successful experiences as examples for implementation in affected countries.

The challenges of prevention, reinsertion, reintegration and rehabilitation are complex, and there are no simple or single formulas. Solutions must be designed on a case-by-case basis, keeping in mind the particular conditions of the situation. Dialogue and cooperation are, without a doubt, the best tools at the disposal of the United Nations to work in countries where there are children recruited by illegal armed groups.

For prevention and rehabilitation policies to be successful, a great financial effort is required by affected countries, as well as the support of the international community through cooperation and technical assistance, since this situation arises in developing countries with economic and financial limitations.

While we thank the Council for its interest and its monitoring of this issue, we believe that the United Nation's social and economic development system must work together on this matter both within the system and with affected countries to find lasting solutions that benefit children affected by illegal armed groups.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Bukeni Beck, representative of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict.

Mr. Bukeni (*spoke in French*): I wish to express my deep appreciation to the Government of France for having organized this debate and inviting to the Council a representative of civil society. In particular, I would like to thank the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations for its remarkable leadership in chairing the young Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

We are pleased with the appointment of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy to the post of Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and we thank her for the important work that she has done. We also thank UNICEF for the important work it has done on the ground and pledge our cooperation in an ongoing basis.

My name is Bukeni Beck. I am director of AJEDI-Ka/Project Child Soldiers, which is a Congolese non-governmental organization for the rights of children. We are working in Uvira, in South Kivu. My organization is an active member of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, whose goal is to protect children and to monitor and report abuses.

I am chagrined to have to report that in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo grave violations of children's rights continue and are even intensifying, particularly in rural areas. The reason for this is simple — there is nothing there to protect them.

The action of the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has certainly been beneficial, but it remains limited in scope. The response to violations must be strengthened in towns and carried into the villages to put an end to killing, mutilation and torture of children, to recruitment of child soldiers, to attacks against schools and hospitals, to rapes and other sexual violence, and to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Stronger efforts must also be made to ensure access of children to humanitarian resources, including those of psychosocial sustenance.

I find it particularly alarming that we have learned that Bunia rebels in the Ituri region continue to enlist children into their army. "What good are all your reports and tables on abuses suffered by children", I am asked by inhabitants of my village, "if the culprits go unpunished?"

Monitoring and reporting of abuses against children is an essential starting point to ensure their protection. However, that is not the end of our duty. We also need to confront declared violations and put an end to impunity for their perpetrators. Today, thanks to resolution 1612 (2005), the Security Council and the United Nations system as a whole are in a position as never before to prosecute thousands of guilty parties for their crimes against children.

Meanwhile, it is my honour to present a number of recommendations to change the life of children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

First, the Security Council should mobilize the political will that is necessary, after so many years of promises, to arrest the guilty and help the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to establish national tribunals that would arrest and try those who violate children's rights, as well as follow up in support of the work of the International Criminal Court in the country.

Secondly, it is up to the Member States to support the Security Council and the United Nations so that definite measures to improve the protection of children can be implemented.

Donors can ensure the financing of monitoring and reporting mechanisms that not only work for disarmament and demobilization but also help in long-term reintegration, particularly of girl combatants.

The United Nations bodies and agencies must remain committed in equal and transparent partnerships with civil society to carry out monitoring and reporting in the ultimate goal of an appropriate response to declared violations.

The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must ensure implementation of the sanctions imposed by the Security Council against those responsible for violations of the rights of children.

Finally, the international community has made a great deal of progress in combating the terrible crimes perpetrated against children in armed conflicts throughout the world. The children of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of other countries expect of us that we put an end to attacks and to the impunity that allows violence to continue. The time has come to act. They can wait no longer.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Benin, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset, Mr. President, to tell you how pleased we are to be participating in this open debate of the Security Council, convened by your country as part of your presidency. Please accept my heartfelt congratulations. Last year our two delegations worked very hard together to bring to a successful conclusion the difficult negotiations on resolution 1612 (2005), which established a monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict.

We express our deep appreciation to Ambassador de La Sablière, in his capacity as Chairman of the Working Group on children and armed conflict, as well as to the other members of the Council for the significant progress made in the implementation of the resolution. The mechanism is now operational and is being strengthened thanks to the joint efforts of Council members and of the new Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy. We commend her for her vigorous efforts, and we would recall also those made by her illustrious predecessor, Mr. Olara Otunnu — a staunch defender of the cause of children in armed conflict. We also welcome the contributions of other agencies of the United Nations family that are actively participating in the implementation of the mechanism.

The international community's combat against the phenomenon of the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts is now reflected in a wide-ranging mobilization and in increased pressure on the parties concerned so as to induce them to abide by international norms for the protection of children in armed conflict, by motivating them to make concrete efforts to put an end to violations of all aspects of the rights of children.

My delegation is particularly pleased at the creativity shown by the Council in operationalizing the Working Group in a manner that guarantees the mechanism's universality. Benin attaches great importance to this principle.

We are truly pleased to note the spontaneous commitment of a number of countries that are not on the Council's agenda to cooperate voluntarily with the mechanism. We strongly hope that it will be expanded, within the set time frames, to all countries affected by this phenomenon. We call on all countries directly concerned to associate themselves with the efforts being made by the Security Council and the international community in this area.

The work of the Security Council has, fortunately, been supplemented by considerable efforts on the part of international civil society and non-governmental organizations, many of which are working to implement resolution 1612 (2005). Their

operational activities in the countries concerned strengthen the mechanism on the ground by helping to promote the coordination of national monitoring and reporting networks.

Thanks to civil society and to non-governmental organizations, the Security Council can now focus its attention on the most remote villages. The Council must do everything in its power to determine ways and means of helping to resolve the specific problems identified by the mechanism's local and international partnerships.

In that regard, we should focus in a sustained manner on measures that could be taken to give the mechanism's local partnerships the means that they need to ensure the rapid reporting of information on violations and to come to the assistance of the children concerned; to speed up the reaction of the relevant authorities with respect to actions to be taken to put an end to the reported violations and to allow for the prosecution of the perpetrators; and to increase the level of protection of the mechanism's local partnerships so as to shield them from reprisals.

In addition to the steps taken to demobilize child soldiers and to rehabilitate them and reintegrate them into their communities, the question of the violence and sexual exploitation experienced by children and young women merits particular attention. The heinous crimes committed against them should motivate the Council to contemplate coercive measures of deterrence to prevent violations of the rights of children. Increased cooperation with the International Criminal Court would contribute to the credibility of the Council's determination to put an end to impunity in that area.

The Council should also strengthen its action regarding related factors that have an impact on the situation of children and young people in terms of international peace and security. My delegation would like to highlight in particular paragraphs 13 and 16 of resolution 1612 (2005), which targets certain activities such as the illicit movement of small arms, the illicit trade in natural resources and other destabilizing cross-border activities.

The Council should also take into greater account the obvious correlation between the social problems of children and young people and the proliferation of internal armed conflicts, and it should also take steps to find better ways of preventing and resolving them.

However, beyond a sectorial approach — which is, of course, important — the Council's action would be more effective if the United Nations were to develop a comprehensive conflict-prevention strategy, as called for by heads of State and Government meeting at the September 2005 summit.

The President (*spoke in French*): Naturally, we have not forgotten the historic role that Benin played in establishing this process, as Mr. de La Sablière recalled this morning.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Israel, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Sermoneta (Israel): Mr. President, at the outset, I would like to join my colleagues in expressing my thanks to you for having convened this meeting. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, for her valuable contribution to today's meeting. Finally, I would like also to thank the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Veneman, for her work and for that of all UNICEF staff in this important area.

Israel ascribes great importance to protecting children during armed conflict and is encouraged by the continued efforts of the Security Council and the Secretary-General to that end. We believe that children in particular should live without fear of physical, psychological, and all other forms of abuse emanating from conflict. It is our responsibility to protect them and to instil in them a reverence for life and respect for all their fellow human beings, under whichever national flag they may live.

Israel is concerned about the ongoing cases of violence against children during times of conflict throughout the world. We appreciate the emphasis in recent reports on protecting children in armed conflict, and we believe that continuing grass-roots efforts, alongside greater government involvement, can alter this disturbing trend.

We note with particular interest the observation of the Council's Working Group that the majority of conflicts today occur within national boundaries. Many of the most infamous civil conflicts of recent decades have been in Africa. But Israel also bears the burden of a neighbouring failed State: the failure of Lebanon to fully extend its sovereignty over the whole of its territory and the growth of an ingrained terrorist infrastructure and ideology that has moved into that

vacuum. We can sympathize with the inhabitants of those areas who are held hostage to an ideology of hate and death, because we too are held hostage to Lebanon's failure.

In the north of Israel children are the victims of wave after wave of rockets and mortars — thousands of them by now — launched indiscriminately by Hizbollah terrorists. May I remind the Council that Israel completely withdrew from that area more than six years ago.

Israel must further note the cynical and dangerous exploitation by the State supporters of the Hizbollah terrorist infrastructure, Syria and Iran. By deliberately embroiling the civilian population of Lebanon in this conflict, they have reduced these innocents to mere pawns in their regional strategy.

In the south of Israel children have also been subjected to an ongoing barrage of Qassam rockets launched from the Gaza Strip, an area administered by the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority. Israel disengaged from that area almost one year ago.

Hundreds of thousands of children in my country have no summer vacation — no time to play in the fields and playgrounds with their friends in what should be a time in their lives free of stress and anxiety. Instead they hear the wail of sirens and know the look of fear on their parents' faces as they scoop them up in their arms and run to bomb shelters. And they are the lucky ones who have not personally experienced the damage and death visited by terrorists' rockets.

Palestinian children are victims of a culture of hate and violence. They are indoctrinated from a tender age by their teachers and by textbooks and learn to denigrate and delegitimize the other. Finally, in the ultimate act of hate, they are brought to the point where they are willing to embrace their own early deaths for the sake of other people's deaths. What more shocking abuse of children could one imagine than to strap bombs around them and send them on suicide missions to kill other innocent civil ·ns — when they have probably not had an opportunity to play football with other children and school mates more than a few times?

Schoolbooks from all over the region, including from Member States that took the floor only minutes ago, similarly call on children to sacrifice themselves. In a typical example, one text instructs schoolchildren that martyrs have nothing to fear and nothing to be sad about. We must put an end to such virulent indoctrination if there is to be any hope for our future generations to live together in peace. This is probably the most extreme example of the opposite of education.

The reality on the ground has created difficult questions for us as a nation, such as how States are effectively to fight terrorist organizations that deliberately endanger both the civilian population they target and those they use as human shields. How can States exercise their legitimate right to take defensive measures against terrorism without causing undue harm to the civilian population? We wrestle daily with the strategic and ethical complexities of this balancing act. It is, we have observed, a debate that has not entered the halls of government of some of our neighbours, especially those of Lebanon, Syria and Iran.

Our foremost obligation as a nation is to protect our civilian population from violence. That is not only an obligation, it is a right recognized by the Charter of the United Nations. Yet we must also take great pains to minimize any harm to other civilian populations, thereby preserving the fundamental values, principles and the democratic rule of law that defines Israel as a nation, which we proudly embrace. We grieve for all civilian casualties on all sides. We hold those who have knowingly and deliberately precipitated this violence fully responsible.

We must emphasize the difference between terrorists that deliberately target innocent civilians — especially children — including the States that sponsor them, and those States that, acting defensively, target these lawless terrorists. Not to make that distinction is to lend equal legitimacy to terrorists who carry out unprovoked terrorist acts and States acting in self-defence. That would run counter to all international precedent and the Charter of the United Nations itself and would serve to encourage terrorists to commit ever greater numbers of terrorist acts.

We have heard today of Israel's alleged indifference to the lives of children in the region. I must say here emphatically that we want nothing more than to ensure the safety of all children, in Israel and throughout the region. The most direct path to that goal is the cessation of terrorist acts emanating from these areas. We have shown time and again that when there

is peace on our borders we have no interest in interfering in the internal matters of our neighbours. On the contrary, the terrorist organizations of Hamas and Hizbollah, the Governments of Syria and Iran and the Palestinian Authority have all shown callous indifference to all children in the region by instigating and perpetuating terrorist acts against Israel.

Finally, we must ask: What of the children who survive these conflicts around the world? Who can gauge how they will grow up? We cannot sit idly by while these vile, callous terrorists and their sponsors and purveyors of death around the world create countless more lost generations. We have finally learned the lesson of the past that implores us to resolutely resist the creeping ideology of hatred and violence that threatens us all. All nations here must recognize the danger posed by this terror to their own States and, ultimately, to their own children, whom they have the most sacred duty to protect. We ask the entire international community to stand with us and against the devastation visited on children by wanton, indiscriminate terrorism and violence.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the current stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.